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THE
MARTYRDOM OF ST. STEPHEN:

THE SEATONIAN PRIZE POEM FOR 1891.

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM ROWNTREE, M.A.,

RECTOR OF ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ABERDEEN;
AND LATE EXHIBITIONER OF CLARE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

"De lapidibus istis suscitare filios Abrahæ."

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TO
MY FATHER
I INSCRIBE THIS POEM,
WITH DEEP AFFECTION AND GRATITUDE.

* * Any proceeds arising from the sale of these pages will be given to the fund now being raised to defray the cost of recent repairs to the fabric of St. Paul's Church, Aberdeen.



THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. STEPHEN.

Ακουε, Νέμεσι τοῦ θανάτου.

SOPH. El. 792.



PICTURED, as I read, the scene of old
When Paul, proclaiming the Redeemer's name
To the barbarian multitude, was stoned

At Lystra by a fickle populace,
The tools of Jewish envy. Left for dead
Without the gate, disciples weeping round,
He rose unhurt amid the astonished throng,
And passed into the city, to the home
Of Timothy, there secret welcome found,
And sweet solicitude, and ministry
Of female hands, and comfort, purposing
That on the morrow he and Barnabas,
Obedient to the word which Jesus spake,
Would flee to Derbe.

And methought that, as
In after years at Troas, on the eve
Of parting, in an upper room he preached,
So here in private, fearful of the Jews,
The converts came together; simple souls,

A few hearts touched by grace, God's husbandry,
 Of precious sheaves a handful, sown in tears
 And peril, to be watched with anxious care,
 Ere reaped to life eternal. Barnabas
 Was there; and Timothy, dear youthful saint;
 Eunice, and the venerable form
 Of Lois; others too, whose memory
 Has perished upon earth, albeit in Heaven
 Their names are written in the Book of Life.

With these at eventide the Apostle sate,
 The goat's-hair, oft his task in calmer hours
 Of sacred colloquy, neglected now,
 While somewhat in his troubled mien bespoke
 The workings of a spirit deeply stirred.

'Beloved,' he began, 'beyond my wont
 Ye see me moved, for God hath brought to-day
 Past things to my remembrance, tho' indeed
 Forgetfulness was not, brought vividly
 Myself before myself, as in a glass
 Mirrored with startling truth. Ye saw me stoned
 To seeming death, yet not to death itself.
 The Lord is very pitiful to me,
 To Saul the persecutor, who blasphemed
 His faith, His Christ, forced others to blaspheme,
 Haled forth His saints to prisons and to death,
 Thinking I did Him service. Ignorance?
 Ay, therefore found I mercy; therefore He
 Condemns me not, tho' I condemn myself,
 Forgives me, howsoever I loathe myself.
 It was for me, for me, that Stephen prayed,
 "Lord, lay not to their charge the sin they do."
 If dying men speak aught of prophecy,

His is fulfilled in me, since here to-day,
 Preaching the very truth for which he died,
 Myself nigh perished by the self-same death.
 I love not life, as if 'twere much to lose;
 Altho' to live is Christ, to die were gain;
 God is my record with what willingness,
 What joy, I would depart and be with Christ
 In glory. But to stand, as I have stood,
 Full face with death, yea, feel its very throes,
 And then be snatched away by miracle,
 Can point but one significance for me,
 Can issue in one sequel, only one,
 Labour abundant above other men's,
 To spend and to be spent proclaiming Christ,
 Henceforward that no toil, no sacrifice,
 No pain, no self-denial, and no death
 Be shrunk from by this bought and branded slave,
 This less than any least of all the saints,
 This Paul, the chief of sinners, saved by grace.'

Much moved, he paused a moment; then amid
 Deep silence,

'Brethren in the Lord,' he said,
 'Bear with me, if ye list to hear the tale
 That weighs upon my spirit day by day,
 How heavily to-day! yet brings relief
 Being uttered. Thou canst witness, Barnabas,
 Dear fellow-worker, of the things I tell,
 For thou hast known them.

'Some twelve years ago

It may be, tho' it seems but yesterday,
 Since there was living in Jerusalem
 Stephen, a holy man most dear to God

(How dear to me his memory!) full of grace
 And power, and mighty wonders wrought by faith,
 And wisdom of the Spirit. Apt to teach,
 Persuasion waited on his hallowed lips,
 While falsehood shrank abashed. And since in deeds
 Of holiest charity he far surpassed,
 And mercy to the poor, for Jesus' sake
 Who loved the poor, and made Himself so poor
 To give us treasure, when the brethren chose
 Seven men of zealous mark, to minister
 About the daily portion, and engage
 In almsdeeds and good works from house to house,
 This man grew chief among them. Thus he wrought,
 Thus taught, so rich a blessing from the Lord
 Dropped dew-like wheresoe'er his steps had been.
 And in Jerusalem from day to day
 Men saw him, whom to see was to confess
 The power of goodness, heard him, and believed
 Jesus the very Christ. Then madness seized
 Upon the Jewish rulers, jealousy
 Of this new doctrine, scorn of men who preached
 A Nazarene the goal of prophecy,
 A crucified Messiah, not alone
 For us, the seed of faithful Abraham,
 Led forth by Moses thro' the wilderness,
 With signs and wonders on the nations wrought,
 With laws and statutes from the fiery mount,
 With angels' food from Heaven; but even for them
 (Blest truth!) for them, the heathen, all the world,
 Gentile or Israelite,—and this was He,
 This Jesus, who declared the day should come
 When men might worship God in any place,
 If spirit and if truth were there. Such things

I heard in the Cilician synagogue
 With holy boldness and resistless skill
 Uttered; whereat I burned within myself,
 A straitest Pharisee, I burned to crush
 The rash blasphemer, and tread under foot
 Truths that to me were wormwood. My chance came;
 Not once nor twice (a Doctor of repute
 Among the people, at Gamaliel's feet
 Trained with assiduous care) I reasoned high
 Of proof and counterproof and precedent,
 Type, antitype, fulfilment and design,
 Against this man disputing eagerly
 'Midst the confounded elders, and was lost,
 Again took courage, and was lost again.
 Yes, dauntless champion of the grace of God,
 I own thy mastery now, thine arms I prove,
 I battle for the cause thou heldest dear,
 The truth that is in Jesus, there alone.
 How little dreamed I then that, vanquished thus,
 'Twas God contending with me, yea, God's love
 At issue with man's pride! In vain, in vain
 With wayward heels I kicked against the goad;
 Ere long it tamed me.

'Not as yet; blind hate
 And disappointment urged the rulers on,
 Me foremost, to suborn false witnesses,
 Whose perjured lips mixed poison with the truth
 We could not gainsay. In high council met,
 With dark and threatening aspect seated round,
 We set him in the midst, we heard the men
 Repeat their slander, saw *his* countenance,
 Serene in conscious innocence and love,
 Beautiful in the light of holiness,

Beam, as with joy those angel faces beam
 God's glory shines on in the highest Heaven.
 A moment we were hushed, a moment awed;
 Then came his answer. How we gasped and frowned,
 Eyeing with alien scorn a form that seemed
 Instinct with inspiration! Word by word
 Fell like the lava, like the lava scorched.
 He took us thro' the story of our race
 From the great ancestor; showed Abram first
 Devout in Ur, in Haran; thence removed
 To Canaan, of fixed altar or sure home
 Possessing but the promise; Egypt next,
 Feeding the famished Jacob and our sires,
 Beheld their worship for four hundred years,
 Till Moses freed them; that was holy ground
 In Midian, where the Bush burnt unconsumed;
 The Tabernacle in the wilderness
 Wandered for forty years; and even at last,
 When Joshua led them safe o'er Jordan's flood,
 Never, till David reigned, was any house
 Designed for God; but peaceful Solomon
 His glorious Temple reared. How then assert
 One spot, one only, sacred upon earth
 For worship? Can the Highest ever dwell
 In any temples made with human hands?
 Well asked Esaias to what resting-place
 Could mortals bind an omnipresent God,
 Whose throne is Heaven, and the created world
 His footstool.

'Thus with gentlest argument
 He sought to win the council, sought in vain.
 Then, as he marked the cloud of furious hate
 Grow darker on all faces, suddenly

Himself the judge arraigning *us*, he cried,
 "Stiff-necked, uncircumcised in heart and ears,
 Resist ye still God's Spirit, as of old
 Your fathers did? His prophets slew they not
 Then, as ye now have crucified the Christ
 His prophets told of? Angel ministries
 In vain have glorified the Law they gave,
 Powerless to force obedience."

‘Then the cloud

Brake into sudden flashes of clenched teeth
 And thunderous clamour, for his words had cleft
 Our hearts in twain. But he, all faith, to Heaven
 His radiant eyes uplifting from the strife,
 There in the inmost sanctuary beheld
 God's glory seated on the sapphire throne,
 And Jesus standing by. Which, when declared,
 So wrought upon our fury, long deprived
 Of open vision for our nation's guilt,
 And eager to cry shame and blasphemy
 On whoso saw what was denied to us,
 That, feigning outraged ears, in wild array,
 With shouts of execration, rising up
 We swept him forth beyond the city walls,
 To die. Their raiment at my willing feet
 The slanderers laid, then wielding mighty stones,
 Hurl'd them. But he, with angel face upturned,
 Of crashing blows oblivious, heeding naught
 Save the one glorious hope, cried, "Jesus, Lord,
 Receive my spirit." Then upon his knees
 Fallen, as the murderous hail went shattering on,
 Almost the very words that Jesus prayed
 Came from his lips, "Lord, charge them not with this;"
 And then he fell asleep.’

The Apostle ceased,
 And in the gathering dusk a deeper awe
 Filled the disciples; men unused to tears
 Wept silently, while sobs suppressed in vain
 Shewed woman's heart divinely touched. Awhile,
 Letting each hallowed impulse have its way,
 Grief, admiration, pity, he delayed,
 Ere thus resuming,

‘Doubtless ye will ask
 How felt, how fared the persecutor then.
 Friends, did I find misgivings in my heart,
 Or wish the deed undone, or know remorse,
 Shame, penitence, or fear? From his high nest
 On yonder Sable Peak¹ an eagle swoops
 Upon the wandering lamb, strikes out its life,
 Soars upward; does he falter, feel regret,
 Let fall his bleeding prey, *before* the shaft
 Sped by the indignant shepherd forces him,
 Cast headlong down, to feel the death he gave?
 Reflect I would not; conscience sleeping yet,
 Was silent, or if heard, the whisper died
 In fiercer zeal; with stubborn feet I spurned
 Against the pricks, and knew not tempting fate,
 Blind, hurried on to that transcendent hour
 Of grace abounding toward abounding sin,
 When o’er the Syrian noon-day flashed a light,
 And thro’ the noon-day stillness spake a Voice,
 Revealed a Name above all other names,
 Jesus, the martyr Stephen’s martyr Lord,
 The Nazarene, the Crucified, indeed

¹ The Kara-Dagh, or “Black Mountain,” near the probable site of Lystra. Conybeare and Howson, *St. Paul*, Chap. vi. (Vol. i. p. 227); and Smith’s Dict., Art. *Lystra*.

The very Christ exalted to the skies,
My Saviour and my King for evermore.

‘Now glory be to Him who, when I deemed
Myself the persecutor of His Church,
Made me the victim of His own pursuit,
Arrested, and in triumph led me forth
To suffer many things because of Him,
The prisoner of the Lord, a spectacle
To men and angels of the uttermost
Of His redeeming power and righteousness.’

Again he paused, his tremulous utterance
Broken by deep emotion, while around,
With looks and gestures of respectful love,
In silent sympathy, the brethren stayed
His leisure. When at last he found a voice
Firmer and more composed,

‘’Twas thus,’ he said,
‘That Stephen sealed his record with his blood,
Won first the martyr’s crown of victory.
Ay, for he proved a victor even in death,
As Samson in his end was more avenged
Than ever while he lived. Nor deem it strange
If martyrs die. Fallen nature welcomes not
Truth, nor the Spirit’s motions, with desire,
Nor yields at once obedience to the faith,
But in contempt or malice holding them,
Reveals the Cross a scandal to the Jews,
And folly to the Gentiles; prejudice,
Content in darkness, hates the name of light,
Straitens the freedom of the grace of God,
Limits the illimitable One, who wills
That all be saved, with whom is no respect

Of persons, in whose sight is neither Jew,
 Greek, Scythian, nor barbarian, bond nor free,
 But only ransomed souls, bought with a price
 Beyond all reckoning. Israelites indeed
 With the true circumcision of the heart
 And spirit, Abraham's seed approved by God,
 Howe'er despised of men, are all who hear
 The proclamation of the Cross with joy,
 And in believing find eternal peace,
 Each soul a temple of the Holy Ghost,
 Man reconciled to God, and sin forgiven.

'Nor less because the Cross restrains from sin,
 Thwarts evil passions, curbs ambition's wing,
 Dissuades from avarice; asks lowliness,
 And men are proud; commends self-sacrifice,
 And men are self-indulgent; looks for love,
 They hate each other; tells them to forgive,
 Where now they seek revenge; the holy way
 Of Jesus suffers spite and enmity,
 His own redeemed are martyrs like their Lord,
 Like Stephen, and like James by Herod slain.
 'Tis but as Christ foretold; on earth, He said,
 There must be persecution, bonds, and death
 For His sake. Yes, the Gospel lives on pain,
 And grows by tribulation. Ere He comes,
 I know not, many more may die for Him;
 For like a stormy wind that scatters wide
 The fruitful acorn or the precious seed
 To rise and ripen in another soil,
 Is persecution of the faith; one dies,
 Surviving thousands fly; the truth is spread;
 Believers grow; the Lord is glorified;
 Thus good results from evil, life from death,

Dismay and darkness turn to light and joy,
And failure and defeat to victory.

‘Wherefore, beloved in the Lord, we live,
We heralds of the Gospel, and beseech
That ye would likewise live, as dying men,
On every side tho’ troubled, not distressed;
When persecuted most, forsaken least;
Whether we live, as living to the Lord,
And if we die, yet dying unto Him;
Living or dying, His. For gifts of grace,
And knowledge of the truth revealed in Christ,
Are lodged in earthen vessels, things of clay
A touch can shatter, for this end alone,
His praise, who saves by many or by few,
And thro’ man’s weakness works with power divine.

‘And O what strength in trial’s darkest hour,
If Faith, assured that neither life nor death,
Famine, nor tribulation, nor the sword,
Nor powers, nor principalities, nor aught
Present, nor aught to come, our blood-bought souls
Can sever from God’s love, O then what strength,
If Faith, with calm unerring gaze, can look
Away from self, away beyond the storms
Of circumstance, the hate of evil men,
The strife of tongues, all transient earthly cares,
To where, above the tumult far withdrawn,
Above the waterfloods, in perfect peace
And glory upon glory manifold,
Jesus, the Lamb of God for sinners slain,
The crowned and sceptred Prince of martyrdom,
Beside His seat upon the eternal throne
Stands up to cheer, to succour, to bestow,
Whene’er we sleep in Him, the things prepared,

Unheard of, unimaginable, unseen,
 For them that trust Him! What, beloved ones,
 What are the sufferings of this present time,
 What even the bitterness of death itself,
 The grave's dark triumph what, beside the joy,
 The eternal weight of bliss, in Christ's elect
 Ere long revealed? Who would not suffer pain,
 Shame, insult, die a thousand thousand deaths,
 For such a glory? There, 'mid happy throngs,
 Angels, archangels, all the Heavenly host,
 Saints, martyrs, from the myriad shores of earth,
 Around the throne of the redeeming Christ,
 Sin, sorrow, death, all vanquished, we shall rest,
 And so remain for ever with the Lord.'

He ceased; and homeward as the simple group
 Departed, holier calm and sweeter hope
 Shone in believing hearts at peace with God.
 And early on the morrow once again
 They sought him, and with wives and little ones
 Bringing the two Apostles on their way
 A mile beyond the city, there with tears
 And prayers and many a blessing, let them go.



JEREMIAH:

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“Hopes have precarious life;
They are oft blighted, withered, snapped sheer off
In vigorous growth, and turned to rottenness;
But faithfulness can feed on suffering,
And knows no disappointment.”

G. ELIOT, *The Spanish Gypsy*.

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TO MY FATHER.

Last year glad laurel; now, thy memory's due,
I blend it with the cypress' mournful hue.

JEREMIAH.

"Hunc ego si potui tantum sperare dolorem,
Et perferre...potero."

VIRGIL, *Aeneid* iv. 419—20.

'Is any grief like mine? Did I desire
To bear Thy message? I was but a child,
Unripe in age, of understanding slow,
Not trustful of myself, nor eloquent,
When first Thy stern inexorable voice
Brake on my priestly dreams at Anathoth,
And bade me play the prophet, prophet-priest
A foe to priest and prophet. From the womb
Why was I foreordained to bear a life
Of harsh contention, ever to proclaim
My country's ruin, ever disbelieved?

'O that my head were waters, and mine eyes
A fount of endless tears by night and day
Wept for the slain of Zion! Testify,
Thou God of truth, if ever I desired
The woeful time, if ever utterance
Of mine hath brought the consummation near,
Hastened Thy work one hour. O could there not
Any with evil will at her be found,

No Balaam, bid to speak the thing he would,
 No vengeful Meroz-angel crying woe,
 That I who love her better than my life
 Must knell her doom, a solitary voice,
 A discord in the hum of flattery
 That mocked this people with the pledge of peace?
 Is it because I yearn for sympathy,
 And lean to human kinship, as the rose
 Turns and unfolds before the fostering sun,
 That that unchallenged heritage of man,
 Common as light, as air, denied to none,
 Connubial joy, the love of wife and child,
 Soft glances, circling arms, the homeward thought
 That sweetens every toil, were not for me?
 Is it because I fain would injure none,
 Recoil from strife, and long for quietness,
 Would bless, not curse, that contumelious hate,
 And cold averted looks, and alien sneers,
 Derision, and the pointing hand of scorn,
 The torturing stocks, the dungeon deep in mire,
 Reward the pensive prophet? "Lo," they cry,
 "He falls away to the Chaldaean foe;"
 And all my fault is this, that Babylon,
 Her monarch and her might, are means of Thine
 To scourge apostate Judah, whose one hope
 Is that surrender which my lips advise.

'Thus evermore Thy word is my reproach,
 And Thou my terror, till, like him of Uz,
 I cursed the day my mother brought me forth.

'I knew not what I said. O Lord my God,
 I will be patient, patient. Other men,
 Yea, prophets like myself, have felt the pang
 Of disappointed hopes, on evil days

Fallen, as of old the seer in Ramah fell;
 Or that spent exile, sleeping in the wild,
 Who heard a voice at Horeb; ay, or one
 Within the hollow tree by godless hands
 Asunder cleft for witness borne to truth;
 Or one I well remember, slain for words
 So like to mine, his end so nearly mine.
 O golden years of good Josiah's rule,
 When monarch, people, prophets, blest alike,
 Walked in Jehovah's ways! O royal saint,
 Striving to bring thy country back to God
 Ere smitten in the battle, we shall ne'er
 Behold thine equal more. Our nostrils' breath,
 Our shadowing refuge from the heathen hordes,
 The Lord's anointed, snared in heathen toils!
 The glory hath departed; darkness falls,
 For Judah's sun hath set. Not thine the blame
 For her deep wound of sin too slightly healed,
 Self-cured upon the surface in a day,
 True Healer and true balm alike despised;
 Much promise, little fruit; the cry of peace
 Where peace was none, tho' the Baal-altars fell,
 High-places ceased, the Moloch-fires were changed
 To holocausts of idols, Kidron's brook
 Ran choked with spoil, and bones of slaughtered priests
 Polluted every shrine; then in God's House
 Here in Jerusalem, while craftsmen wrought
 To grace the slighted sanctuary, the priest
 Hilkiah found in some neglected spot,
 With dust of ages foul, an ancient roll,
 Scanned it with startled eyes and blanching cheek,
 And knew Jehovah's violated Law,
 The long-forgotten parting utterance
 Of Moses on the sultry plains of Moab,
 Ere the death-angels claimed him. The rent robe,

The king's word, and the prophetess' reply,
 The long rehearsal, the hushed multitude,
 The high resolve, the solemn festival,
 What profit these, if with an iron pen,
 Yea, with a diamond point, on stony hearts
 Judah still writes her sin? Of what avail
 With senseless iteration to proclaim
 The Temple, ay, the Temple of the Lord
 (Rather a den of robbers), to what end,
 If tyrant kings, and princes violent,
 Puppets of Egypt's or Chaldæa's pride,
 Build mansions by oppression, cedar-ceiled,
 Vermilion-painted, while the hireling groans
 Unrecompensed, while guiltless blood is shed,
 The widows and the fatherless are spoiled,
 The needy cry, and have not? Shall the Lord
 Not visit for these things, nor be revenged
 On such a nation? Therefore these that were
 As Gilead and the head of Lebanon
 Perish: the people's darling, mourned in vain,
 Returns no more; another dies unwept,
 Unepitaphed, an outcast; goes a third,
 A plucked-off signet, utterly despised,
 Leading the long procession of despair,
 A captive broken idol. One remains,
 Perfidious, with *his* feet amid the clay,
 Doomed.

'It was hard, unutterably hard,
 To forfeit, one by one, the cherished hopes
 That made my prophet's life not all in vain,
 Nor all in vain the prophet's agony,
 Nor all in vain the travail of to-day,
 To-morrow grown fruition. It was hard,
 Hope's sequel shorn away, for patriot eyes

To watch the dark inevitable fate
 In ever-narrowing circles, hour by hour,
 Close, like the ruthless eagle round his prey.

‘And still, by spoken word, or pregnant sign,
 Or letter to the captives gone before,
 I lifted up my voice, a jarring note,
 And bare my witness, and for guerdon took
 Reproach, and all intolerable wrong.
 Once even at Anathoth they sought my life,
 My friends in youth; once in the Temple courts,
 Dark with the doom of Shiloh, death drew nigh;
 Once, when the scribe’s roll blazed before the king,
 God hid both scribe and prophet from the rage
 That sought them.

‘For Jehovah’s word is sure,
 Graven on the tables of the universe,
 Tho’ books that spelled it perish, and the voice
 That gave it utterance be mute in death.
 Yet lips God touches with the fire of truth
 Must surely writhe, being scorched; the heart that bears
 His awful message aches beneath the load;
 The feet that run for Him will bleed with thorns.
 What then? Prove faithless to the high behest,
 Slip from beneath the burden, and rejoice,
 Lose the seer’s grief, but lose the glory too?
 Thus my temptation came: I would refrain;
 Why should I sow contention in the earth?
 Let me be silent. Other seers proclaimed
 Assurance and glad counsels, tho’ they lied,
 In league with haughty priests to sway the crowd.
 False to their God, and to their country false,
 Jehovah had not sent them, yet they ran;
 What God had never spoken, they devised;

The burden of the Lord was what they would,
 Their own hearts' vision, to the scorers peace,
 Not peril, yea, the breaking of the yoke,
 If yoke should be. I could not speak as these;
 I would be dumb. Vain hope! The word within
 Burned like a pent-up fire that must escape,
 Or else consume its prison. Some there are
 Who keep the prophet's name, but break the trust,
 Speaking smooth lies to please the carnal ear;
 And some that, grappling sorrow to their soul,
 Lose hold of love and sweetness, and the truth
 Unmixed with self, to find a gloomy sense
 Of consolation for the woes they bear
 In menace. Was it ever thus with me,
 The prophet's vision darkened by the mists
 Of human circumstance; the heightened phrase,
 Or the diminished warning; fear of man,
 That blunts the harsher word it may not spare;
 Or petulance, with judgments feigned from Heaven,
 God silent? Earthly passion, tainted truth,
 Are these my guilt? If so, my sin exceeds
 My country's, and the prophet more than all
 Needs knowledge of himself, and change of heart.
 O frail deceitful heart, unmeet to bear
 God's glorious oracles, self-righteous, proud,
 Reluctant! I behold reflected here
 My people's fault, with startling truth revealed
 In mine own bosom; here within myself,
 As there in them, two selves at issue still,
 Good, evil; which will triumph there, and here?
 I cannot bid the rich man glory not
 In riches, nor the wise exchange his boast
 Of wisdom for the knowledge of the Lord,
 And turn to Him from them that are no gods.
 When have I purged myself from vain conceits,

Or burnt mine idols of self-righteousness,
 Or done God's work with gladness? Can I blame
 False prophets, if myself not wholly true?
 Am I so sure that Baruch needed more,
 Baruch, my trusty scribe, the counsel given,
 To shun self-seeking, just with life content?
 God keep *me* faithful when the end arrives;
 God make *me* firm, if e'er temptation come
 In any wise to profit by the doom
 Awaiting Zion. Tho' the victor smile,
 Promise rewards and ease in Babylon,
 Nay, force me thither, still my heart would cling
 To loved Jerusalem, then doubly dear;
 My joy, to comfort any that remain;
 My sorrow, to discover some retreat
 In cave or leafy lodge for solitude
 Amid the heaps of ruin, and pour out
 A lamentation.

'Lord, I know man's way
 Lies not within himself, to guide his steps;
 Instruct the prophet and the people both;
 Correct us, but with judgment, not in wrath,
 Or else we perish. In the potter's house
 When, wrought upon the wheel, the treacherous clay
 Defies the craftsman's purpose, patient still,
 He straightway changes its allotted end,
 And from the self-same clod, with skilful hand,
 Brings forth a vessel of another use
 And fashion. Be it so with us, O Lord,
 With us repenting. Cast us not away,
 Cast not Thy chosen away, like useless sherds
 Thrown to the filth in Tophet. If indeed
 It must be so, this dread captivity,
 These penal seventy years in Babylon,

Still out of failure, in another age,
 A future generation, shall arise
 A vessel fitter for the Master's use,
 A nation with a King in righteousness
 Supreme, a Branch of David, prosperous
 In all things, dealing justice in the earth.
 Then Judah saved and Israël redeemed,
 Owning allegiance to the holy Name,
 Shall find **THE LORD THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS** therein.
 Jehovah's rescue from Egyptian bonds,
 His wonders in the wilderness, shall pale
 Before this nobler triumph. Never more,
 Bewailing the lost children of her love,
 Shall Rachel's voice be heard disconsolate
 In Ramah. For her exiles shall return
 From far-off countries, yea, they shall return;
 Even as the shepherd gathers to the fold
 The wanderers of his flock, so shall the Lord
 Restore His own to Zion; thitherward
 Their faces shall be set, and faithful men,
 True pastors, there shall feed and visit them;
 The peace of God shall rest in every heart,
 And on all tongues rejoicing evermore.

'For in the fulness of that ampler time
 God for His ransomed people shall provide
 A thing divine, unheard of, wonderful,
 Another Covenant, a league of grace
 And truth, not traced, like that they brake before,
 On Horeb's fiery stone, but graven in hearts
 That know Him from the greatest to the least;
 A Covenant of unremembered guilt,
 A pledge of mercy not imputing sin,
 A promise of forgiveness full and free
 For ever.

'And there came Hanameël,
 My kinsman, to the prison, for I knew
 The Lord had sent him. Other hands than mine
 Shall guide the share along the slanting fields
 Of Anathoth, and gather harvests there.
 Yet the sealed chart, the shekels duly weighed,
 The wondering witnesses, the vase of clay,
 The captive prophet, the besieging foe,
 Shall stand for signs in unbelievers' eyes
 That God is merciful, that yet again
 This desolated land, the spoiler's prey,
 Shall blossom into fruitfulness, again
 Shall overflow with cheerful industry,
 Houses and vineyards on the sunny hills,
 And pastures in the valleys, be possessed,
 While penitence with joy goes hand in hand,
 And restoration.

'As the sinking sun
 Kindles the clouds behind him into piles
 Of glory, so my life grows beautiful
 In retrospect, my dark and stormy life,
 Transfigured into new significance,
 Grows golden with a peaceful afterglow
 (Blest compensation for the yoke in youth!)
 Of strange sweet meaning. The prerogative
 Of pain, the prophet's heritage of woe,
 The seer's beatitude of suffering,
 The faithful censor's meed of calumny,
 Beseem so great an argument as life
 Evoked from death, and darkness yielding light,
 And fields of havoc budding into peace,
 And judgment become mercy. The weak flesh
 Shrinks, but the sovran spirit overcomes.
 Illusions end, the dreams of other days;

Remoter visions greet mine aged eyes,
 But surely more divine. Good missed for self,
 I now perceive, is good for others won;
 Hopes unfulfilled to-day are hopes reserved
 For issues unimaginable yet.
 Defiant faces, unbelieving hearts,
 Hate, and the miry dungeon, and the stocks,
 A life of persecution, these I hold
 God's witness to the truth, and for myself
 Alike both discipline and glory.

‘ So

God's dealings with His people justified
 Shall justify His dealings with the seer.
 A free-will offering, for weal or woe,
 Thro' good or ill report, in life or death,
 I share Jehovah's counsel, aid His plan,
 Embrace His purpose, ask no higher boon,
 One tragic fate too cheaply sacrificed
 To that unfolding splendour yet to be,
 One agonised career a trifle spent
 On such a consummation.

‘ Hark! the shouts

Of conquest, and the wailing of despair,
 Reach the guard-chamber here. The breach is made,
 And the Chaldaean hour, in vain foretold,
 Arrives at last. What destiny soe'er
 It bring the prophet, on Thy people, Lord,
 Have mercy, mindful of the Covenant
 Proclaimed by these unworthy lips, Thy new
 And better Covenant of righteousness
 And peace, in days that I shall never see.’

Thus pondered Jeremiah, knowing well
 The substance of his hope, but not the mode
 Of God's fulfilment, in another Life
 Of pain and contradiction; knowing not
 That One to come (the Branch of David's line)
 Born from the womb a Prophet and a Priest,
 A Man of many sorrows, like himself,
 Despised, rejected, crucified, should weep
 Long ages after o'er Jerusalem,
 Her final visitation, all unknown,
 Merged in irrevocable doom. But we
 Have seen the type fulfilled in Antitype,
 Heard the divine lips of the Son of Man
 Telling how oft beneath the wings of love
 He would have hid her children, heard Him cry
 With broken utterance, 'If thou hadst known,
 If only thou hadst known, the way of peace!'
 This was the Covenant the seer foretold,
 With how sublime a Victim sealed in blood!
 This was its Mediator, to His own
 Come, and they cast Him out: and crucified,
 Vaunted their Temple, as their fathers did,
 Knew not One greater than the Temple there.
 Here was obedience learned by suffering,
 All self-ward thoughts absorbed in sacrifice,
 No stones exchanged for bread, nor weariness
 For soft repose, nor hatred for the breath
 Of popular applause, nor needful truth
 For silence, nor the Cross descended from,
 That scoffers might believe. 'Thy will be done;

If not undrained this cup may pass away,
Thy will be done, my Father.'

Thus His work

Mocked the supreme Artificer again,
Past hope of remedy. Then came the foe,
The trench around, and famine, and despair,
Flames, slaughter, centuries of homelessness,
Zion a heap of stones. The Covenant
That Israel spurned, the nations eagerly
Welcome; whereout there grows from every land
That fold of alien sheep the Lord proclaimed,
One flock, obedient to one Shepherd's voice.
Thenceforth throughout a world-embracing Church,
Jew, Roman, Greek, barbarian, bond or free,
Wherever simple hearts believe and live,
The glorified Redeemer on His throne
Rejoices, and the travail of His soul
God's mightiest Prophet sees, and is content.

MOUNT ZION

THE SEATONIAN PRIZE POEM FOR 1895

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM ROWNTREE, M.A.

VICAR OF WRAWBY, LINCOLNSHIRE
AND LATE EXHIBITIONER OF CLARE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

"Me receptet Sion illa,
Sion David, urbs tranquilla.

.
Urbs cœlestis, urbs beata,
Supra petram collocata,
Urbs in portu satis tuto,
De longinquo te saluto,
Te saluto, te suspiro,
Te affecto, te requiro."

HILDEBERT, BISHOP OF LE MANS

CAMBRIDGE
DEIGHTON, BELL AND CO.
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1896

Cambridge:

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AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

MOUNT ZION.

“*Εἶη, Ζεῦ, τὴν εἰρήνην ἀνδάνειν,*

*ὅς τοι τ’ ἐφέπεις ὄρος, εὐκάρποιο γάλας μέτωπον, τοῦ μὲν ἐπωνυμίαν
κλεινὸς οἰκιστὴρ ἐκύδανε πόλιν
γέλτονα.”*

PINDAR, *Pyth.* 1. 29—32.

I worshipped where the mellow minster choir
Chanted at eventide that glorious ode
Harped by some ancient Psalmist, when by night
God's angel, succouring Jerusalem,
Dealt awful devastation thro' the ranks
Of Asshur's slumbering chivalry. 'The Lord
Is great, and highly to be magnified,
Upon the holy Mountain of our God.
How beautiful for height, a world's desire,
Mount Zion stands! Look northward, and behold
The royal citadel, within whose halls
Jehovah's arm is found a sure defence.
Earth's monarchs have gone by with martial pomp,
Astonished at the sight, and sore afraid,
Like mothers when they feel their pangs approach,
Like ships of Tarshish broken by the blast.
Our eyes have witnessed what our fathers told,
How God upholds and will for ever keep
The fortress of His love, the love we hail
With rapture in His Temple. As His name,
His praise is universal; His right hand
Is full of justice. Then be Zion glad;
Let Judah's daughters laud His righteousness.

Encircle Zion's hill; go round about;
 Count all her towers; observe her bulwarks well,
 And mark her palaces; repeat the tale
 To generations after. For this God
 Is ours for ever and for evermore,
 Our Guide and Guardian to the gates of death.¹

So sang they. Something strange, I know not how,
 The venerable place, the sunset hour,
 The melody, my spirit's answering mood,
 Touched the familiar theme, heard oft before,
 With meaning yet unfelt. The patriot flame,
 The passionate love, the pride, the scorn of foes,
 The exulting trust in God, the certain hope
 Born out of past fulfilment, all awoke,
 By swift imagination realized
 In riper hues of golden Gospel light
 Around the sacred Record.

I beheld
 The acropolis of the vaunting Jebusite,
 Impregnable for ages. At her feet
 Hosts marched, and bloody battles swayed and swept,
 As round a mid-sea rock unheeded waves
 Dash harmless. Israel came; the heathen holds
 Fell swift and sure before a conquering arm
 That left her scatheless.² Many a warrior's heart,
 Joshua's or Gideon's, or the Danite strong,
 Or valiant Saul, or fiery Jonathan,
 Had chafed in gazing on her alien strength,
 Her trenches dug by nature, and her walls
 A precipice, 'the cripples and the blind

¹ Psalm xlviii.

² Judges i. 8 seems to refer either to some brief and temporary occupation, or more probably to Jerusalem, the lower city, as distinguished from the upper city of Zion. Cf. Josh. xv. 63; Judges i. 21; xix. 11, 12.

Defence enough,' she laughed, in fierce contempt
 Eyeing the pigmy foemen far beneath;
 Till David spake, 'Let whoso first ascends
 And hurls yon boasters down my captain be;'
 And by the gutter creeping, fearless Joab,
 With clutch like iron on the slippery steep,
 Clomb up to fortune.

So fair Zion passed
 To David and his heirs, a lordly seat,
 A mountain-throne meet for the King of kings,
 Invisible, eternal, honoured most
 When earthly monarchs wield in righteousness
 His delegated sceptre, happy thus,
 The ruler and his people blest alike,
 Confusion else. So reigned the shepherd king.
 What great ideals filled his princely soul,
 What high resolves, what solemn purposes,
 What zeal to work Jehovah's sovran will,
 When, the pure golden crown about his head
 God set there, as he ranged his new-built halls,
 Inspired and holy visitations beamed
 Upon the poet's heart; his harp he smote,
 Sang to the Lord a song of equity,
 The loving justice that befits a king;
 Of wisdom in the ways of godliness;
 Of grace, His presence yielded, ever thus
 To tread those chambers with a perfect heart,
 Hating the faithless sin, the froward act,
 The secret slander, the resentful look,
 The lips that lie! Should David harbour such
 In Zion? Who is this that grovels here,
 A king in sackcloth on the cedarn floor,
 And calls himself a traitor to his God,
 And knows himself unchaste, assassin, liar?
 'Lord, Lord, have mercy; take away my sin;

Renew me, purge me from the guilt of blood;
 Thy sacrifices are a contrite heart;
 A broken spirit here I offer Thee;
 Be gracious unto Zion as before;
 Build up the walls of loved Jerusalem.'

But long ere this a glorious day had been,
 When upward from the happy Gittite's home,
 With solemn pomp, in festal raiment all,
 A glad procession moved; the priestly choir
 Before, the minstrels after; in the midst
 Fair girls with timbrels; then the sacred Ark,
 Dread emblem of the Majesty Divine,
 By Levites borne; and last the joyful throng.
 Ye peaks of Basan, envy Zion's bliss,
 Where God prefers to dwell. The Lord ascends
 With spoil, and captive leads captivity.
 Then pealed in high responsive interchange
 The question, 'Who shall climb Jehovah's hill?'
 The quick reply, 'The pure of heart and hand;'
 The summons, 'Lift your heads, eternal gates,
 The King of Glory knocks;' and from within
 Brave challenge, 'Who so proud a title claims?'
 And the great shout in answer, 'God of Hosts,
 The mighty Lord of Battles, is His name.'

Thus had the Lord His Tabernacle pitched
 Upon the Mount He loved, a season thus
 To sojourn, while uneasy sate the king
 In splendid halls, with holy discontent
 His spirit vexed within him at the sight
 Of Israel's God in humble curtains closed,
 Earth's kings in palaces. Remember, Lord,
 How David sware (the record lives in Heaven)
 To fix Thy dwelling-place; his eager hope
 To build a worthier House, his own assured

For ever for that wish, tho' yet denied,
 How tenderly denied! with golden pledge
 Of high fruition in serener days
 Of peaceful Solomon's majestic sway.

Now, bent on empire, Zion arms her hosts
 For enterprise on many a gory field,
 In stubborn siege, or sack. Philistia shouts
 Forced homage. Out of Israel issues forth
 A sceptre smiting thro' the coasts of Moab
 In carnage, a poor menial remnant left,
 As one would spare a laver from the spoil
 To bathe the victor's feet. Proud Aram yields
 His golden targes and his brazen prey;
 While Edom stoops to vassalage, a slave
 Loosing his master's sandals. Ammon too
 Smarts bitterly for that foul insult done
 The messengers of peace. Ah, then, methought,
 Where tax and toll and tribute's golden tide
 Flowed to the conqueror's feet, and trembling kings
 Obeyed his nod, that ancient prophecy
 To the desponding Patriarch, as he dreamed
 In horror of great darkness ages since,
 Grew ripe. In central Jebus holding sway
 O'er vanquished nations, Israel sits enthroned
 From Nilus to the Babylonian stream.
 Methought on Zion, round the sacred Tent,
 Amid the Levite choir, Benaiah stood
 Before his doughty comrades of the sword,
 The brave six hundred. How the pæan rings,
 High thoughts to noble music aptly joined,
 The monarch-minstrel's task, what time the Lord,
 The Lord his stony rock and his defence,
 His buckler, yea, the fortress of his might,
 Gave triumph o'er his foes!

For Zion's power
 Stood ever in her God, and only there ;
 Not in her æry solitude secure,
 Nor in her soaring strength impregnable,
 Else had she ne'er been Israel's, nor a spoil
 For fierce Chaldæan hate, or Roman rage,
 Or bigot Islam's fury. Strong, yet weak,
 And taught alike by weakness and by strength
 Where self-dependence ends, where faith begins,
 Lest blessing prove a curse. Unto the hills,
 The mountains round about Jerusalem,
 The Psalmist lifted up his yearning eyes ;
 But whence came help ? Ah, surely not from these,
 Except as emblems of the sleepless love
 Encompassing God's own. Not David's arm
 That snapped a bow of steel, no warrior's sword,
 How keen and strong soe'er, could bring success ;
 Asshur nor Egypt's broken reed avail ;
 Nor horses, useless on the flinty rock ;
 Nor chariots, vain among the narrowing hills.
 Unmoved, her God within her, she remained ;
 Lo, Judah's Lion, couching in His lair,
 God's Lion, Ariel ; who shall rouse Him up ?
 His covert is in Salem, and His den
 On topmost Zion ; from the heights of prey
 He roars ; the chariot and the horses fall ;
 Swift arrows of the bow lie broken there,
 Shield, sword, and battle. Thus was Israel taught
 How nature might suffice as far, no more,
 As in His aid they trusted ; if they failed,
 Invincible no longer. Zion sate
 Enthroned in proud security, then fell,
 Arose and fell, and rose again, and fell,
 A parable to the world, a sign to prove
 God's willingness to save, man's fatal power
 To make salvation vain.

Yet fair thou wast,
 O Zion, in thy prime, on hallowed hills
 Thy strong foundations, wet (so fancy feigned)
 With dews of Hermon, and thy gates beloved
 More dearly by the Lord than all abodes
 Of Jacob. Glorious oracles were thine,
 City of God. In perfect beauty seen,
 Blessing and life for ever promised there,
 From out that home of their solemnities
 Jehovah shone, His people's Lawgiver,
 Judge, Saviour, King. How blithely thrice a year
 Rejoicing multitudes, on service bent
 And sacrifice and saintly fellowship,
 Went up with festal songs, from strength to strength,
 Cheating the weary way, till every soul,
 From upland Dan to sultry Beersheba,
 Their feet within thy gates, Jerusalem,
 Before the God of gods adoring stood!

Ah, beautiful in vain, and knowing not
 Why beautiful, altho' for Israel's sake,
 And for the God of Israel's, only fair,
 How brief the zenith of her beauty shone!
 How paled her glory, when with step-dame frown
 She spurned the indignant tribes, that evermore
 Disowned her shrunken sceptre, and forsook
 Her worship, Gilead lost, Manasseh gone,
 Ephraim, her helmet of protection once,
 Grown envious; when with blind unholy zeal
 Her princes and her people sought alike
 Preëminence in evil, hating right,
 Her priests corrupt, her prophets either false,
 Or slain declaring truth! In heedless eyes
 Oft prospering more, the more apostate grown,
 More cankered inwardly, more seeming fair,
 She ripened for her fall. What tho' there towered

On that adjacent hill, Moriah's crown,
 The wonder of the Temple's costly stone,
 Rich Lebanonian cedar, Ophir's gold,
 Treasures of every clime; tho' liturgies
 Of hollow sacrifice and heartless praise
 Ascended there? Was God not jealous still?
 Did the high-places cease, Baal's altars fall?
 Did Ashtoreth's polluted orgies end,
 Or Moloch's hideous fires forego their prey,
 Or monarchs fear, or nobles take reproof,
 Or crowds learn wisdom? Downward, ever down,
 With obstinate endeavour, warned in vain,
 All penance, all reprieve, alike in vain.
 So Jordan, overflown with molten rills
 From Hermon's icy summit, hurries down
 Precipitate, his early struggles o'er,
 Resenting every check; engulfed ere long
 In marshy Merom; thence recovering head,
 With fiercer torrent eager in his ire
 To mock the peaceful scenes of Galilee,
 Confounded as before, and seeming lost
 In the wide lake, his ineffectual way
 Scarce wins; at length emerging once again,
 Tho' yet unschooled, impetuous rushes on
 Still downward, in a deeper deadlier haste
 Cleaving his desperate path, with driftwood strewn
 From desolated banks, a reckless flood,
 Watched by the scornful hills on either hand,
 Swirls headlong, ever downward; and at last,
 Inevitable doom, tho' long deferred,
 Sinks in the sullen silent Sea of Death.

No, not unwarned. The flame of prophecy
 Shone brightly there, fanned oft to livelier hues,
 And glowing with intenser heat, thro' storms
 Of guilt and persecution. One bold seer

Transfixed a murderous libertine with shafts
 Of allegoric truth. Another strove
 With fasting litanies of tearful crowds,
 Rent hearts, but garments whole, to turn away
 Heaven's wrath. A third, the greatest of them all,
 Who thro' the night of ruin saw by faith
 The Light that should illumine all the world,
 A sinless One for sinners crucified,
 Break like the welcome day-spring from afar,
 Was sawn asunder. One the sword consumed.
 One in the Temple perished. One endured,
 Unapt to forge a lie, the torturing stocks,
 The miry dungeon's horror, his deep heart
 Breaking, his eyes a cataract of tears
 For Zion's hastening doom.

Meanwhile at times

Came accents of serener harmony,
 Like bells across the water, heard at eve
 Far-off, or nearer on the freshening air,
 Fraught with a golden tale of things to be ;
 Sweet promise of the future, grace for grace,
 Repentance, and the Covenant renewed
 In restoration, out of failure help,
 And humbler hearts and holier purposes
 Won from the past, and zeal in serving God,
 And happy looking-for of One to come,
 Immanuel, the Lord their Righteousness,
 True Servant of Jehovah, David's Heir,
 From Judah going forth to rule the world
 In equity for ever. Wake, awake,
 Put on thy strength, thy beautiful array ;
 The Lord shall comfort thee for many woes ;
 All thy waste places shall be comforted,
 And thy redeemed with everlasting joy,
 Thanksgiving, and the voice of melody,

Their faces thither set, return to thee.
 Rejoice, O Zion, in the Lord thy God;
 His law proceeds from out His dwelling-place,
 His word from blest Jerusalem. Arise
 And thresh, O daughter, till the nations bow,
 Hasting to seek the Mountain of the Lord,
 The House of Jacob's God, and learn His ways,
 His paths adopt, their swords to ploughshares bent,
 Their spears to pruning-hooks. For unto thee
 A glorious Child is born, a Son is given,
 Whose name is Wonderful, the Counsellor,
 The mighty God, the great eternal Sire,
 The Prince of Peace, established on the throne
 Of His forefather David evermore.

But sorrow first. And when at length it struck,
 That stern Chaldæan hour, what anguish reigned
 In Zion, as the weeping train went forth,
 Never, save here and there a little child,
 To seek, in tottering age, those haunts again,
 And marvel at the change! What sad complaint
 Mirrored the bleeding heart of one forlorn
 (Like Troy's unheeded prophetess) who sate,
 The spoiler's desolating fury spent,
 In solitude amid the ruins! 'All
 The ways of Zion mourn. Her outstretched hands
 In vain seek comfort; and her solemn feasts
 And Sabbaths are forgotten as a dream.
 Is this the city that men counted fair,
 The boast of earth? Her breach, as ocean wide,
 What hand shall heal?' And when in Babylon
 Beside the lazy stream their tuneless harps
 They hanged upon the willows, was it strange
 No songs of Zion issued from their lips
 To meet the scoffer's challenge? Was it strange
 God's hymns were silent on that alien soil?

Better oblivious fingers lost the trick
 Of once familiar chords, each useless tongue
 Should wither, than Jerusalem become
 An unremembered joy.

As sleepers dread
 The waking that oft mars a blissful dream,
 As vernal torrents in the thirsty south
 Refresh the ripening glebe, where saffron stores
 Of harvest make the smiling swain forget
 The tears of seed-time, passing wonderful
 For sweetness was the rush of glad surprise
 When God repealed the long captivity
 Of Zion, when her exiles turned again,
 Iniquity forgiven, and hope revived,
 With idols cast away from chastened hearts,
 And frequent prayer, and hastening prophecy.
 Yet ere fulfilment came, o'er Zion swept
 New terrors, the usurping Greek, blockade,
 Slaughter and sacrilege, Epiphanes
 The spoiler, and the glorious Maccabee;
 Next faction, and abuse of priestly sway,
 Fear, and the foul assassin's deed of shame;
 Thenceforth Rome's eagles, and that iron heel
 Of calm relentless power, and tribute grudged
 To Cæsar, and the Zealot's dark desire,
 Self-righteous Pharisees and scowling priests,
 The pomp of Herod. Ay, one greater King;
 God sets *His* King on Zion's holy Mount.
 Cry, daughter, thy Redeemer comes to thee,
 Long promised, long expected. Armour bright,
 The crown, the purple raiment, where are these?
 Ask not; Jehovah's ways are not as ours.
 An Infant in a lowly mother's arms;
 A gentle Child, with eager heart and brain;
 A pensive homeless Prophet; and at last,

Meek, borne upon an ass thro' rustic throngs
 O'er palm-strewn paths, in weeping majesty,
 Omnipotent to save, His life He gives
 A ransom for the world. Ah, wondrous love!
 Ah, base infatuation! Had she known,
 Had Zion only known, the ways of peace!
 Blind, self-destroyed; her end fanatic zeal,
 Rebellion against fate, the legions' tramp,
 Unutterable woes, inhuman deeds,
 Despair's own frenzy, famine, fire, and sword,
 One heap of desolation. Rome had wrought
 God's doom.

But not before Jehovah based
 Upon a firmer rock a wider realm
 Gates even of Hell shall not prevail against,
 That adamant Rock of ages past,
 Eternity to come, the living Christ.
 Not in the mountains at Jerusalem,
 Nor any sole exclusive sanctuary,
 But everywhere, in spirit and in truth,
 So men uplift pure hearts and holy hands,
 The God that is a Spirit may receive
 Meet worship. Let the Roman work his will,
 'God's will;' the fiery Moslem ravage there,
 This too, perchance, 'God's will.' But surely not
 'God's will' that Europe's flower of chivalry,
 With rash depopulation in its train,
 Courage before, credulity behind,
 Should fall by thousands for an empty dream
 Opposing Heaven's decree; nor children ask
 At every stage of the vain pilgrimage,
 'Jerusalem? is this Jerusalem?'
 Nay, simple ones, remain at home to pray;
 The weary quest resign. In every place
 Eternal God lives, loves, and answers prayer.

For Zion perished, but her name survives
 Upon an ampler Kingdom without end.
 The things that might be shaken passed away,
 The type, the sign, the sacrificing priest,
 The central altar blazing morn and eve,
 The smoke of incense. Things unshaken yet,
 Nor ever to be moved, are ours to-day ;
 The substance of all forms and shadows cast
 By Zion, ere the Sun of Righteousness
 Arose above her summit, making earth
 One greater Zion for the countless tribes
 Of Israel not according to the flesh,
 Nor any will of man, but born again
 Of water and the Spirit. These are come,
 With grateful hearts embracing His decree,
 To the new Zion of the living God,
 Jerusalem from Heaven, and myriad hosts
 Of angels, and that universal Church,
 Divine assemblage of the sons of light,
 Whose names, all firstborn, heirs and kings and priests,
 Adorn the Book of Life, to God Himself,
 The Judge of all, and souls of holy men
 Made perfect, and to Jesus glorified,
 Blest Mediator of a Covenant
 Surpassing Horeb's, and the sprinkled Blood
 That pleads for mercy with sublimer voice
 Than Abel's for revenge.

The nations come,
 They come. The kingdoms of the world are grown
 The Kingdom of our Christ. Lo, pressing on
 With hallowed emulation, at His feet
 They lay their tribute, and their eyes behold
 Their Monarch in His beauty. Make a road;
 Cast up the people's highway; call its name
 The path of holiness, where simple steps

Shall err not. And the Saviour, writing up
 His household, shall enroll from every clime
 One here, another there, in Zion born,
 Glad citizens of Heaven, an endless throng,
 The Lord's adopted offspring, sons of grace.

Yet once again. Earth's tyrannies o'erpast,
 Sin crushed, and Satan bound, yea, death itself,
 Last enemy, destroyed, in golden streets
 Of Zion, re-created earth and Heaven,
 With righteousness therein, all place denied
 For aught unclean, false, or abominable,
 The ransomed of the Lord shall walk secure
 In the pure light of everlasting bliss,
 Which night eclipses not, nor curse annoys;
 No sun, except the Sun of Righteousness;
 No stars, except the saints in dazzling white;
 No temple, for they worship round the throne
 Of the redeeming Christ, a glorious band,
 His name upon each forehead, whence they fling
 The crowns His life-blood purchased at His feet,
 Once wounded feet, upon the crystal sea,
 The while their feathery palms they wave aloft,
 Or sweep untaught their harps of massy gold,
 And make Heaven's gemmed foundations echo back
 Their thundered hallelujahs.

Come, O come,
 Proud world; the Spirit and the Bride invite;
 Let whosoever will repent and live.
 And Thou, great Saviour, bring Thine advent near;
 Accomplish soon the roll of Thine elect;
 And bid Thy Kingdom come, where saints rejoice
 In that celestial Zion evermore.

POLYCARP

THE SEATONIAN PRIZE POEM FOR 1896

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM ROWNTREE, M.A.

VICAR OF WRAWBY, LINCOLNSHIRE

AND LATE EXHIBITIONER OF CLARE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

“So, caught, I burn.

Burn? heathen men have borne as much as this,
For freedom, or the sake of those they loved,
Or some less cause, some cause far less than mine;
For every other cause is less than mine.

.
How now, my soul, we do not heed the fire?
Faint-hearted? tut!.....Faint as I am,
God willing, I will burn for Him.”

TENNYSON, *Sir John Oldcastle.*

CAMBRIDGE
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POLYCARP.

“Τὶς δὴ ποταίνιον

ἐλαχε στέφανον

ἁγώνιον ἐν δόξᾳ θέμενος ἐὺχος, ἔργῳ καθελὼν ;”

PINDAR, *Olymp.* xi. 60—3 (ed. Don.).

A.D. 155—6.

Found faithful unto death ; so crowned with life !

That omen in the fatal hour at Rome,¹
When ghostly trumpet-accents in mine ear
Cried, “ Polycarp is martyred,” it was true.

And here in Lyons, by the rushing Rhone,
His pupil Irenæus, of the Church
In Gaul an Elder, I peruse with tears
The tale of that fulfilment, as they told
That witnessed it in Smyrna, writing thence
A letter, Evarestus’ handiwork,
Of tidings to the Philomelian saints,
Whereof this transcript, to Pothinus sent
And me, Pothinus oft himself of old
The martyr’s hearer, reacheth us to-day.

10

Fulfilled indeed ! My master would declare,
Rapture with awe contending while he spake,

¹ See Bp. Lightfoot, *Essays on ‘Supernatural Religion,’* p. 267, note 1 ;
A. Plummer, *Church of the Early Fathers*, p. 42.

Not from the written Record, but as drawn
 Again and yet again from very lips
 Of the beloved John, the wondrous theme;
 What things the entranced Apocalyptic seer 20
 Beheld in lonely Patmos; how the Christ,
 Pacing amidst His golden candlesticks
 With feet like burnished brass beneath a robe
 Clasped with a zone of gold about the breast,
 His aspect as the sun's meridian orb,
 Eyes flaming under locks of snowy wool,
 The strong right hand one blaze of glittering stars,
 With voice of many waters, out of lips
 That held a twin-edged falchion, uttered forth
 A message to my master Polycarp, 30
 The Church of Smyrna's angel,¹ O the grace
 And power therein made known! The God restored,
 The first and last, who died yet lives again,
 Not Dionysus from destruction raised
 By Rhea, the great mother, as they dream
 In drunken Pramnian orgies; but the Christ,
 True Lord of nature, rescued from the grave,
 That nevermore shall triumph over man,
 By God His Father's might. "I know thy works,
 Thy persecution and thy poverty; 40
 Yet art thou rich. I know the blasphemies
 Of that foul brood from Satan's synagogue,
 Who boast themselves of Israel. Fear thou not
 For aught of suffering; nay, tho' some of you
 The Devil shall imprison, fear him not.
 'Tis but your fiery tribulation sent
 For ten short days. Be faithful unto death;
 And thou shalt wear a nobler diadem

¹ Rev. i. 12—18; ii. 8—11.

Than Bacchic frenzy gives its ruling priest,
His labours o'er, a crown of endless life." 50

So ran the message that my master loved
To speak of, seated on the terraced heights,
Where Tmolus flings an outpost to the sea,
Watching the bright Ægæan flecked with wings
Of argosies from occidental shores
Blown havenward o'er Smyrna's glassy gulf
Along the clamorous quays. Or often, rapt
In deeper colloquy, we wandered on
Beside that ancient stream that claims a son
In blind old Homer. Pacing by the brink, 60
Florinus and myself on either hand
(Half courtier and half saint Florinus was,
Unstable as the waters at his feet;
Vain soul, ambitious of the master's praise,
I tremble for thy faith!), he would rehearse
The story of his life,¹ with here or there
An added touch or a suggestive hint
Omitted hitherto: the Christian birth;
The sacred home of infancy; the zeal
For things divine above his boyhood's years; 70
A father's hope, the prayers a mother taught;
The memory, while a child, of having seen
With awe the first Disciples of the Lord,
From neighbouring Ephesus an aged form
They said was Andrew's, or again, perchance,
Philip from Hierapolis; anon
His heart's desire, to serve in holy rites,

¹ The writer has preferred not, even in poetry, to make Irenæus, who must have known the real facts of the case, responsible for any of the more or less apocryphal details recorded in the *Life of Polycarp* attributed to Pionius.

Fulfilled at last, when saintly Bucolus
 On that young head laid his ordaining hands.
 But, crowning privilege! the cherished love 80
 Of love's Apostle, and to sit at feet
 That walked in fellowship with Perfect Love;
 From hands that handled the pure Word of Life,
 From lips that communed with the Truth Himself,
 To catch truth's essence, and reflect the calm
 Intense illumination of a soul
 That erst in flesh beheld the Light of Light.
 Life, light, love, truth; death, darkness, hate, a lie;
 Christ, Antichrist; no feeble dreamer there;
 A very Son of Thunder, hot for Christ; 90
 No compromise, no dalliance with a world
 Dark, loveless; God or Mammon, all or naught,
 No middle; tender now, yet fierce anon,
 The Friend misjudged or slighted. Fire from Heaven?
 Ay, but the manner of the spirit changed,
 Love's holocaust.

Assimilation wrought
 Half-consciously the self-same character
 In pupil as in teacher. Do the will,
 The doctrine proves itself. Accept, obey,
 The reason follows without argument; 100
 If not, forego the logic, and believe
 Even as a woman or a child believes,
 Own fact, whate'er the cause or consequence,
 Intuitively realising truth
 That others wrestle for. Content to know,
 Keep knowledge, and use knowledge, and hand on,
 Entire and uncorrupted as before,
 That one tradition from the first received,

One Church, one holy doctrine of the Cross,
 Not anxious for the world to stand agape 110
 At strange unauthorised philosophies,
 But rather to be saved. All heresy
 My master, like his master, held accurst,
 And would have cried aloud, and stopped his ears,
 And fled the place in horror,¹ at the sight
 Of unbelieving babblers, as John fled
 The wretch Cerinthus, or saluted them
 Like Marcion in the Roman street proclaimed
 The Devil's firstborn.

I remember well,
 And to my latest hour shall ne'er forget 120
 (Since youthful scenes in keener memory live
 Than aught that follows after), I recall
 The place, the very look my master wore,
 His words, not chronicled with ink and pen,
 But on my heart engraven,¹ whene'er he would
 Portray the great Apostle, or describe,
 As from his mouth received, or haply read,
 Tho' seldom, from that last Evangel-book,
 Some precious record of the Lord on earth;
 How with the Doctor He discoursed by night 130
 Of Heavenly mysteries; how Lazarus died,
 Whom He, the Resurrection and the Life,
 Restored; how doubtful Thomas found belief;
 Or Peter, thrice a recreant, owned Him thrice;
 Or Christ foretold those hundred years of John,
 "He tarries, if I will."

With awe-struck mien
 And voice of deep emotion would he tell

¹ See the Letter of Irenæus to Florinus in Eusebius, *H. E.* v. 20.

Of that dread office of a Bishop laid
 On one so youthful. Could the Apostle's wish,
 A legacy so solemn, a behest 140
 So nearly from the grave, be disobeyed?
 Even Bucolus himself expected it,
 And by conjecture helping to fulfil,
 Foretold none other. The long arduous toil
 Of ruling prudently God's heritage
 Began. The last Apostle fell asleep
 At Ephesus. My master would relate¹
 His wont, amid the congregation set
 In helpless age, to murmur o'er and o'er
 With gentlest iteration, "Little ones, 150
 Love one another." Then when any said,
 "Why this, and only this?" he would reply,
 "It is the Lord's command, including all."

With what a flushing cheek, a kindling eye,
 What envy of the martyr's glorious meed
 (Not aimless, tho' for issues yet unseen),
 Would he recall Ignatius on his way
 To meet the lions; how 'the God-bearer,'
 Passing from sunrise in the Syrian east
 To blood-red sunset in the Roman west, 160
 Pledge of the golden morrow, paused awhile
 At Smyrna, keeping guarded state, as one
 That went for coronation, issuing thence
 Despatches, and receiving embassies,
 Gifts, salutations, while a breathless world
 Beheld with wonder! O too fleeting hours

¹ Although the earliest record of this story appears in Jerome (on Gal. vi. 10), the story is not in itself improbable, and would most likely, if true, be known to Polycarp, and narrated by him.

Of intercourse! O venerable form,
 A mine of hallowed memories! For he too
 Had companied with Apostolic men
 That knew the human Christ, and could reply 170
 With earlier reminiscence, tale for tale,
 To Polycarp, or (due prerogative
 Of age and shadowing martyrdom) advise,
 Reprove, exhort, command the younger saint.
 Together oft we scanned his parting words
 From Troas to my master, "Great the toil,
 But greater the reward....Be sober then,
 God's athlete....As a beaten anvil bear,
 And bearing win the stake, eternal life."

Brave challenge, answered bravely! To be poor,
 Surrounded by the prodigal abuse 181
 Of mercenary gold; amid the groves
 And gay bazaars and stately porticoes
 Of that Ionian paradise of myrrh,
 Twice-yielding vines, and figs, and festivals,
 And dissolute idolatries, a mark
 For Gentile scorn too sensual to receive
 God's wisdom, and too crafty to profess
 That 'madness' of the Cross; for Jewish hate,
 Not Israelite indeed, blaspheming God, 190
 And stumbling at the sign of Calvary,
 The synagogue of Antichrist; was this,
 Was *this* an easy lot, a light career?
 No need of faith, endurance, to bring forth
 'Much fruit' in action as in name,¹ thereby
 The more a true disciple, and fulfil
 That 'angel' of divine Apocalypse,

¹ St. John xv. 8, in the Greek.

That 'athlete' of the martyr's last adieu?

And thus in hourly sacrifice of self
 Found faithful unto death, were death required, 200
 Yea, dying daily with the Crucified
 In spirit, in ambitions weaned from earth,
 In all benign activities, he lived
 And laboured, a true pastor of the flock,
 A shepherd and a bishop of the soul
 After the great Exemplar. Was it strange
 If care of all the Churches, if the staff
 From lifeless hands of Paul, of holy John,
 Of bold Ignatius, to my master fell?
 "Not mine the genius of a mighty Paul, 210
 Wherewith to counsel you, Philippian saints;"
 The needful, if the lowlier, service his,
 To guard the faith delivered. Happy day
 When I with reverential awe became
 A learner at his feet! Long happier years
 In which affection out of reverence grew,
 And admiration ripened into love,
 What time we spake together of the truth
 In Jesus, while the sweet ethereal face
 Reflected in serener holiness 220
 Christ's image, and the slowly blanching head,
 Apt emblem of the daily purer soul,
 Seemed waiting for its crown!

But ere the close,
 One effort yet remained, one enterprise
 For unity, the passion of his life;
 The seamless robe of Christ, that holy Church
 Christ prayed for, that it ever might be one,

By separate observance rent in twain
 About the Resurrection, west from east
 Divided in the gloom of Golgotha, 230
 Divided on the joyful Easter morn.
 Would Anicetus yield to Polycarp?
 Might Peter's usage end, and John's prevail,
 And contradiction close in harmony,
 One fast, one festival? Decline the quest
 At eighty-five, impossible by land,
 A miracle by sea? Ignatius went;
 Why not? The consummation would outweigh
 That hazard of one life so nearly fled.
 O courage of the martyr ere thy time, 240
 Spent, spending all, for Christ! Arrived in Rome,
 Enthusiastic welcome, the right hand
 Of fellowship, hushed crowds awaiting speech
 From the disciple of the blessed John,
 Ere, Anicetus' consecrating hand
 Exchanged for his, they took the mystic signs
 Of Bread and Wine, the banquet of the Lord;
 Even heretics converted by the charm
 Of Apostolic holiness; all these
 Were his, the nobler aim alone denied, 250
 Each holding, but in unison of faith
 And brotherly regard, the bond of peace,
 His own tradition of the Paschal date
 Immutable.

And so to Smyrna back.

To Smyrna for his end. One fleeting year
 Would bring those hybrid orgies round again,
 The Grecian games, the Roman butcheries,

Olympic strife, the circus and the beasts,
 And Bacchanalian lust, and heathen rage
 Against the saints, unspeakable debauch 260
 And gluttony, wherein they take offence
 Because we run not to the same excess
 Of riot. And that issue, dreaded oft,
 Befell, myself no longer there, befell.

How reads the manuscript?

“The Church of God

Now sojourning in Smyrna, to the Church
 At Philomelium, and in every place
 Throughout the world, where lives our holy Faith,
 Peace, mercy, love be multiplied, from God
 The Father, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. 270
 About the martyrs, brethren, here we write,
 Of whom the chief, our blessed Polycarp,
 Sealing the persecution with his blood,
 So closed it, that the Lord in Heaven might seem
 A spectacle of perfect martyrdom
 To grant us. Not with rash unseemly haste
 He courted death, but like the Lord Himself
 Abode his hour, so teaching us to care
 That others, not ourselves alone, be saved.
 How blessed and how noble is the death 280
 That matches with God’s will! For surely we,
 Professing the more grace, are bound the more
 To wait on His disposal.”

Here proceeds

A record of the pains that many bore,
 Scourged till the very veins and arteries

Lay bare, or pressed on lacerating shells,
 Or burnt alive, or to the beasts exposed.
 "Yet in the midst of torture God's elect
 Seemed absent from the body; rather say
 His presence, a familiar voice within, 290
 Consoled them leaning on His grace alone,
 Oblivious of the torments of the world,
 By one short hour of agony below
 Escaping wrath eternal." Nobly done,
 Germanicus, to draw the lagging brute
 Upon thee! Well I knew thy steadfast heart,
 Dear youthful saint. Whereon the multitude,
 More furious, cried, "Away with atheists!
 Bring Polycarp." One Quintus, it appears,
 A Phrygian (the less wonder!) lately come, 300
 O'er-hasty to profess, tho' not required,
 Inciting others too, recants in haste,
 Affrighted at the lions. "For which cause
 We, brethren, censure, as expressing not
 The spirit of the Gospel, all who seek
 The martyr's death."

By rumours undismayed,
 My master, in the city fain to stay,
 Disciples urging, in a rural cot
 Finds refuge. Here in visions of the night
 A blazing pillow signifies his end 310
 Three days before, 'himself interpreting,
 "I must be burnt alive." Again pursued,
 He flies again. A tortured slave reveals
 His hiding. On they rush with armed array,
 To find their captive a serene old man,
 Whose hospitable care provides a meal

To cheer them, gaining thus, while all behold
 In half-repentant awe, two precious hours
 Of prayer for all estates of mortal men
 In all the world, and all that e'er he knew, 320
 By name remembered. Then upon an ass
 They lead him into Smyrna, by the way
 Encountering Herod the Chief-Constable,
 Who takes him in his chariot. Fool! to dream
 Smooth speeches could persuade a Polycarp
 To cry, "Lord Cæsar," sprinkling on the flame
 One pinch of incense. Coward! to thrust out
 And maim an aged saint, who simply said,
 "I cannot do your bidding."

So they reach

The roaring stadium. And behold, a cry 330
 Not earthly rang, "Be firm, O Polycarp,
 And play the man." If ever, surely there
 The true Bath-Kol, the 'daughter of God's voice,'
 Was uttered, ay, made answer for itself
 With courage and a mouth of wisdom given,
 That unpremeditated eloquence,
 Confounding adversaries, which the Lord
 Had promised to bestow. "Pity thine age"
 Refutes the "Spare thy youth, Germanicus."
 Youth, age! eternity will harmonise 340
 This late, that earlier, melting out of time.
 "Away with atheists!" Ah, well answered there!
 The godless crowd; most excellently said!
 Reproach the Christ? "These six and eighty years
 I serve Him; and He never did me wrong.
 Shall I blaspheme my Saviour and my King?"
 Christ King; no king but Cæsar for the mob;

To swear by Cæsar's luck, ignoring Christ
 Who gives the luck to Cæsar, strange indeed!
 No Christian can. Would the Proconsul hear 350
 The Christian creed, assign a time and place?
 No, not the people; magistrates and powers
 The Lord ordains; but (haply with a touch
 Of John's old scorn), "I count the populace
 Unworthy my defence." The beasts, the fire,
 All menace vain. "Your flames a moment burn;
 Ye know not of an everlasting flame
 That waits for wicked men. Pursue your will."
 O joyful face! O confidence and peace,
 While there, another Pilate, sits the judge 360
 Irresolute, abashed! The herald's cry,
 Thrice uttered, "Polycarp declares for Christ;"
 The voices of the raving shrieking crowd,
 With hideous emulation, Greek and Jew,
 Denouncing the subverter of the gods,
 The "father of the Christians," teaching all
 In Asia not to serve or sacrifice;
 The lion, since the games were over now,
 Refused; and last, the long relentless howl
 For fire; imagination paints the scene 370
 Like a remembered thing.

With fiendish haste
 Faggot and fuel in a deadly pile
 They rear, blaspheming Jews, the synagogue
 Of Satan, foremost in assiduous hate.
 Would God that holier service had been mine,
 My ministry to soothe his dying hour,
 My privilege to spare that reverend form,
 Assist him to disrobe, untie the zone,

Kneel down, and loose the sandals off his feet,
Receive his benediction!

380

Not with nails,
But cords alone secured (his own request),
As when for sacrifice a stately ram,
Selected from the flock, the priest prepares,
So like a holocaust approved of God
He stood. What marvel, ere the flame ascends,
If echoes of the blessed Eucharist
(It was their Easter-eve, the letter saith)
Should haunt his parting prayer? "Almighty God,
And Father of Thy well-beloved Son,
That holy Christ, thro' whom our knowledge comes 390
Of Thee, Thou God of principalities,
And angels, and of all created things,
And all the just abiding in Thy sight,
I bless Thee that Thou thus accountest me
Worthy to take, this very day, this hour,
My portion as Thy martyr in the cup
My Saviour drank, that I may rise again,
Flesh, soul, and spirit, in eternal life
And incorruption of the Holy Ghost.
Receive me to Thyself, a sacrifice
Sweet-savoured and acceptable, that thus,
O faithful and true God, Thy will foreshewn
Be perfected in me. Wherefore I bless
And laud and magnify Thy glorious Name,
To whom, with Jesus Thy beloved Son,
Our great High-Priest eternal in the Heavens,
And with the Holy Spirit, honour be
Both now and evermore. Amen."

400

Thereat

The flames uprising make a spectacle
 Most wondrous. Round his figure at the stake, 410
 Like some distended sail that shuns the mast,
 A blazing circle stands, enshrined wherein,
 As in a chamber girt with fiery walls,
 His body not as burning flesh appears,
 But gold or silver in the furnace wrought,
 Transfigured by the glow; whence issuing forth,
 A spicy perfume floats upon the breeze
 Like incense. At the laggard flame enraged,
 The godless multitude with horrid yells
 Demand an executioner; whose blade 420
 Thrust in the martyr's side, behold the fire
 (God's miracle for truth) in crimson floods
 Extinguished!

Thus he dies. But envious yet,
 What calumny, malignant Jews, is this,
 Wherewith ye wrong the saints? "Abandon Christ,
 The Crucified, and bow to Polycarp,"
 Because, adoring Jesus as the Son,
 None other, still, as faithful unto death,
 As loyal to their Master and their King,
 His martyrs we revere? Relight your fires, 430
 Consume that aged corpse, whose ashes yet
 The saints will gather, as men gather gold
 Or rubies above price. And many a year
 On Easter-eve, beside some little mound
 Where lie the calcined relics of the dead,
 Not sorrowful as men bereft of hope,
 But with exceeding joy, the Lord's elect
 Shall celebrate a birth by martyrdom

To life immortal.

And in loving praise
The manuscript continues, eager praise 440
Of so divine a teacher while he lived,
So perfect an example in his end
For hallowed emulation. Then,

“Ye sought
A full recital; Marcus brings you this,
Too brief, perchance, to please you. Which perused
Transmit to those beyond, that likewise they
May glorify the Lord, who chooses out
From all His servants holy men, whose deaths
Exalt His praise. To God, whose bounteous grace
And mercy thro’ the Christ, His only Son, 450
Can in due season lead our ransomed souls
To that celestial Kingdom, glory, power,
Honour and majesty for ever be.
Salute the saints; our brethren here, in chief
The writer Evarestus and his house,
Send greeting.”

Here the date of martyrdom,
Precise and circumstantial, as behoves;
The month of Xanthicus, the second day,
In other words, on April twenty-fifth,¹
The Jews’ Great Sabbath, at their hour of eight, 460
While Herod was Chief-Justice of the Peace,
Philip of Tralles Asiarch, Deputy
Staius Quadratus; yes, and over all

¹ Another reading gives, “seventh before the Kalends of *March*,” i.e. Feb. 23rd.

Christ King for ever!

“Brethren, fare ye well;
 We pray, ye walk thro’ Jesus Christ the Word
 In evangelic truth and holiness;
 With whom to God the Father glory be,
 And sanctifying Spirit, for our boon
 Of free salvation to the saints elect,
 With whom together blessed Polycarp
 Hath suffered as a martyr. In whose steps
 Following, may we be found ourselves with him
 In Jesus’ Heavenly Kingdom at the last
 United evermore.”

470

Amen to that!
 Elijah tarries for Elisha there;
 My master and his pupil meet again
 When Heaven restores the master, snatched from earth
 In Smyrna’s fiery whirlwind, to my side
 For ever, pupils of one Master Christ.

SS. PERPETUA AND FELICITAS

THE SEATONIAN PRIZE POEM FOR 1898

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM ROWNTREE, M.A.

VICAR OF WRAWBY, LINCOLNSHIRE

AND LATE EXHIBITIONER OF CLARE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

“Οὐκ ἔνι δούλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος· οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ.”

Gal. iii. 28.

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SS. PERPETUA AND FELICITAS.

“Longae (canitis si cognita) vitae
Mors media est.
. ille timorum
Maximus haud urget leti metus. Inde ruendi
In ferrum mens prona...animaeque capaces
Mortis, et ignavum rediturae parcere vitae.”

LUCAN, *Phars.* I. 457-62.

“That self-same hour the gaoler washed their stripes,
And straightway was baptized with all his house,
And brought them in, and set before them food,
Rejoicing in the faith.”¹

O blessed words,
Inscribed upon this roll by Tertius lent!
With ever-growing wonder and delight
Again and yet again I read them o’er,
My charter of salvation. I Pudens,
The gaoler, in that other see myself;
For me, for me that humble warder stands; 10
Philippi turns to Carthage² as I read,
And Macedonia becomes Africa,
My very name an omen to myself,

¹ Acts xvi. 33-4.

² The writer has assumed that the scene was Carthage; but see Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, II. 165, note (ed. 1883); Robertson, *Christian Church*, I. 95, note a (ed. 1874).

Pudens, 'ashamed' of Christ no longer now,
 Since put to shame for all my shameful past.

To-morrow shall the pure baptismal tide
 Renew my sinful soul, to-morrow morn
 The catechumen from the stream arise,
 By water and the Spirit born again
 To that blest hidden life with Christ in God.

20

O saints, whose fair example taught me truth,
 O martyrs, from whose dauntless fortitude,
 Found faithful unto death, I knew the love
 Of Jesus, and the rapture of that peace
 Which passeth understanding, on this night
 Of prayer and lonely vigil I salute,
 Full of unutterable gratitude,
 Your hallowed memories, and await with joy
 The precious hour that makes me Christ's and yours.

Mysterious are the ways of God to men.
 How little, when I gazed upon the forms
 And faces of the weeping captive train
 Committed to my charge that fateful day,
 Dreamed I that I should link my faith to theirs,
 And serve the Crucified of Nazareth!
 If ever I be called to suffer bonds,
 Tortures or death for Christ, may strength be mine
 Like theirs who, with the sacramental wave
 Scarce dried upon their bodies and their brows,
 Were led (as Christ from Jordan went of old)
 Into the wilderness, and there approved
 God's warriors. One in Jesus, equal thus,
 Felicitas, Perpetua, bond with free,

40

As, male with female, one with these in Him
 Were Saturninus and Secundulus
 And Revocatus; if, as Paul avers¹
 (My learned catechist hath taught me so),
 Believing slaves are freemen of the Lord,
 Believing freemen are the slaves of Christ,
 In whom is neither sex nor servitude, 50
 Nor any male nor female, bond nor free.

It seems but yesterday these eyes beheld
 That gracious flower of saintly womanhood,
 Perpetua, nobly born and gently bred,
 Scarce two or three and twenty summers old,
 And fair, a youthful matron, with her babe
 Clasped close in her embrace. Ah, starlike eyes!
 Ah, pale sad features, where the peace of God
 Shone like a benediction, and foretold
 Ripe answer to the prayer devoutly breathed 60
 Forth from the lustral water, so 'twas said,
 For strength to suffer, lest the shrinking flesh
 Turn traitor to the spirit that was hers,
 When to the pleading of her aged sire
 Inexorable, "My father," she replied,
 "Bid yonder vessel bear another name,
 Its nature gives the lie. Then bid me not
 Deny myself a Christian."

Heaven forgive
 My guilty part in horrors that ensued,
 The dungeon and the darkness and the stench, 70
 The stifling crowd, the taunts and ribaldries
 Of ruffian guards. O lily flung with weeds

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 22; Gal. iii. 28.

To pine upon a dunghill! Then the babe;
 What marvel if a mother's heart were wrung
 With anguish for her child? Accursed bribe,
 My greedy share now long ago repaid
 To Tertius and Pomponius! Daily then
 In the more open court and ampler air
 She sate amidst her comrades and her kin,
 Fondled and fed the little helpless life, 80
 And in the light of blissful motherhood,
 That touches and transfigures all to gold,
 Beheld her sordid prison a palace grown,
 Her dearest best abode.

Mysterious dreams,

Such visions of the brain upon the bed
 As are the blest prerogative of saints,
 Were hers. How beautiful what Tertius told
 About the golden ladder up to Heaven,
 Beset with swords and lacerating hooks;
 The fiery Satorus (himself erelong 90
 Companion of their fate) ascending first;
 The guardian monster trampled under foot;
 The summit scaled, the garden and the flock,
 The Shepherd, and the myriad saints in white,
 The gracious welcome, the sweet morsel given,
 The loud 'Amen,' the savour when she woke
 Still present. Or about Dinocrates,
 The seven years' child, her brother, passed away
 (Was it without the due baptismal rite?)
 Whom in dark durance held she first espies 100
 Pale, squalid, with the cancer on his cheek,
 The water out of reach, but sees anon
 Cleansed, standing in the light, a comely form,

The fatal sore healed over, quaffing deep
That unforbidden stream.

Long weary days
Dragged on. Reproach and insult died away,
Subdued by that unconquerable force
Of gentle mute endurance. But my heart
Was adamant as yet; my blinded eyes
Saw naught except a dull perversity, 110
Sheer madness, a morose unmeaning spite
Against imperial Cæsar's will,¹ the laws,
The social state, the very gods of Rome.
Then by degrees (they doubtless prayed for us)
My conscience framed the question: Could a myth,
A fond illusion, obstinately chosen,
As obstinately cherished, yield a faith,
A constancy like theirs? The grace, the love,
The gentleness, that hardly seemed of earth,
Might haply prove divine, and being from Heaven, 120
Attest the doctrine equally divine;
And if divine, then true, then Christ Himself
Not one amongst the many, but alone
(Despite the amazing scandal of the Cross)
Sole God.

Thus nourished on the daily scene,
Misgiving grew. Then, whilst a rumour spread
The captives would be judged, again her sire
Essayed to shake her purpose. I beheld,
Nor ever can forget, that moving sight,

¹ The edict of Septimius Severus, himself an African, A.D. 202. See authorities cited in J. J. Blunt, *Christian Church*, p. 283 (ed. 1869); Robertson, i. 92; and notes.

That agonizing cry, "My daughter, spare, 130
 If ever I deserved a father's name,
 O spare these whitening hairs. From childish years
 I nursed thee to the blossom of thine age,
 Dearest of all thy brethren. Shame us not
 Before a sneering world. Destroy not thus
 Thy mother, me, thy kindred, yea, thy babe,
 Who dies, bereaved of thee."

Weeping he spake ;

Then, for albeit in tears, she wavered not,
 He kissed her hands, he fell before her feet,
 Calling her 'lady, mistress of his fate.' 140
 In vain! With streaming eyes and quivering lip
 She sought articulate utterance awhile,
 Ere softly making answer, "What God wills
 Must happen. In His hand our issues rest."

In anguish he withdrew. But heavenly grace,
 Assisting earth's endeavour, in my soul
 Wrought hourly new persuasion. What sublime
 Strange secret, what mysterious hope or law,
 What all-constraining loyalty, was this,
 To filial duty deaf, to nature's claim 150
 Devoutly disobedient? Heathen yet,
 I knew not how the blessed Master said,
 "Whoso forsaketh father, mother, child,
 For My sake, shall obtain eternal life ;
 Who loveth father, mother, more than Me
 Cannot be My disciple."¹

Then one day

A clamour at the gate, a broken meal,

¹ Compare St. Matt. x. 37; xix. 29; St. Luke xiv. 26.

The Procurator's order; and they went
 For judgment. Sympathetic fancy's eye
 Conjectures from an oft-repeated tale 160
 The scene I witnessed not; the seething crowd;
 Hilarian on the stern tribunal set;
 Brief question, and clear answer; one by one,
 The men, Felicitas, Perpetua now.
 A sudden breathless hush! Serene she stands,
 The body just a parable of the soul,
 Her loveliness the sign and sacrament
 Of the yet fairer beauty shrined within.
 But lo, she stoops to listen. Someone speaks;
 An old man lifts an infant in his arms 170
 There by the platform's edge. Her father pleads,
 "O save thy child." Unkind to move her thus!
 Whereat Hilarian adds, "For pity spare
 Thy father's age, thine offspring's tender years,
 Cry, 'This to Cæsar's fortune,' and go free."
 "I will not sacrifice." "A Christian then?"
 "A Christian," she replies. Unhappy sire,
 Thy vain remonstrance punished with the rod!
 Unhappy daughter, feeling every stripe
 As laid upon thyself! Then sentence given: 180
 These Christians to the beasts, a Roman show,
 To grace young Cæsar's birthday.¹

Back to prison

Undaunted they return, awaiting death.
 How futile in her father, if he thought
 To shake her fixed resolve by keeping back

¹ Geta, recently raised by his father Severus to the rank of Cæsar. On this incident in its relation to the date of the martyrdom, and on the probable date of the *Acts of Perpetua*, see Bp. Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, p. 103.

The babe she longed for! ay, more futile yet
 To come again, and pluck his hoary beard,
 And grovelling in the dust, with piteous moans
 Of profitless entreaty, long to die.

Meanwhile the Spirit in my wakening soul 190
 Wrought mightily. Conviction daily grew
 Glad certitude. And when Secundulus,
 Frail stripling, in that loathly dungeon air
 Began to droop and sicken unto death,
 'Twas like a crowning argument to watch
 Those holy Christian women, slave with free,
 Uniting round his bed sweet offices
 Of sisterly compassion, and himself,
 Tho' grieving to forego the martyr's crown,
 How patient under pain, what gratitude 200
 For tender ministry, what soaring faith,
 What quenchless hope of immortality,
 What meek submission to the wiser Will
 That thus o'erruled his own. In rapturous awe
 Sharing with tearful friends the mystic Food
 Pomponius from the congregation brought,¹
 His first, last Eucharist, he passed away.

And on thy lowly form, Felicitas,
 What brought the pangs of travail ere thy time?
 Blind aimless nature? nay, victorious prayer, 210
 Urging the conscious hand of nature's Lord,
 Omnipotent to move Omnipotence
 Against that heathen day; commending thus
 The new-born life to kindly Christian care,

¹ On the conveyance of the consecrated elements to the sick and prisoners by deacons, see authorities cited by Guericke, *Antiqq.* p. 248 (tr. Morrison 1851); Robertson, i. 238, note h.

And thee to thine allotted martyr's end
 In saintly fellowship. Inhuman taunt!
 "How wilt thou bear the beasts, enduring ill
 These pains of birth?" O faithful brave retort!
 "Alone I suffer *now*; within me *then*
 The Christ I die for suffers."

Once indeed, 220

Once only, when the tribune, lending ear
 To vague and lying rumours of release
 By magic, on those weary captives heaped
 Intolerable wrong, Perpetua flashed
 A sarcasm: "Why disgrace your festival
 With lean and battered victims?" Yet methinks
 God's miracle, not man's or devil's art,
 Delivered Peter out of Herod's hand,
 Set Paul and Silas in Philippi free,
 And saved the gaoler, as this Record saith. 230

And that 'free supper' on the final eve
 Before the games; no riot or debauch,
 As heathen captives use, devoid of grace
 And shameless. I myself have oft beheld
 Their hideous orgies: "Let us live to-night;
 We die to-morrow." Rather prayer and praise,
 The seemly talk, the tuneful hymn, the feast
 Of Christian love and fellowship, earth's gifts
 With holier joy partaken, Heaven so near.
 And while at open doors the gaping crowd 240
 Stared, and the wonder grew, that ardent blood
 Our Afric suns enkindle fired the tongue
 Of Saturus: "Ay, mark our faces well,
 That ye may know them at the judgment-day."

The fatal morrow came, that parted us
 For ever upon earth. But ere it dawned,
 I poured my tale into Perpetua's ear,
 Avowed myself a Christian. O the joy
 That lighted up her sweet ethereal face!
 Such rapture as the blissful angels feel 250
 O'er one repenting sinner. I would go
 Next day, confront Hilarian's grim surprise,
 Outface the multitude's impatient ire,
 Speak forth, acknowledge Christ, deny the gods,
 Enrage the people, die the martyr's death,
Her comrade. With beseeching eloquence
 She won me from my purpose, bade me wait
 The Lord's disposal, if perchance for me
 Some other task remained, more needful far
 Than martyrdom, her earthly fate and mine 260
 Unlike, yet equal in a Master's eye
 Who rates obedience above sacrifice,
 By those that run unbidden served amiss,
 By man's o'er-hasty zeal dishonoured oft,
 By duty never.

So they passed away,
 With prayers and farewell blessings, from the prison,
 And I was left. Imagination wove
 Strange pictures. Before night I knew the truth,
 The very truth, heard since a score of times
 From trusty friends, Pomponius, Rusticus, 270
 Tertius, and many more, that saw them die.
 So vividly do brain and senses hold
 A true report in faithful memory stored,
 And oft revolved in ruminating thought,
 That fancy grows experience. I behold

The myriad-thronged arena. Savage beasts
 Roar from the vaults beneath. Hilarian sits.
 The spectacle begins. The victims come.
 How joyfully Perpetua moves along,
 Singing, with down-dropt eyes, lest men mistake 280
 Their glow for wantonness! Thy saffron robe,
 Ceres, and thine of red, Saturnian sire,
 Vain emblems of idolatry, they spurn;
 Why martyrs else? That scourging of the men,
 Who cried against the Procurator, "Lo,
 Thou judgest us; thyself the Lord will judge,"
 Was brutal, just to please the spiteful mob,
 Before the dens were opened, and they fell,
 Torn, mangled by the beasts.

The women last.

Not nude within the nets! that insult spare 290
 Their shrinking youth and matron modesty,
 Lest deaf to mercy become dead to shame.
 Just one loose garment; so. The crowd acclaim.
 Then the wild heifer's rush and rending horns;
 Perpetua surely dreams, or feels them not,
 With seemly care adjusts her torn array,
 Dreads wounded honour more than wounded flesh,
 True woman to the last, and gathers up
 Her long locks, as the martyr's end were joy,
 Not sorrow, sees anon Felicitas 300
 Prostrate and bleeding from a deadly thrust,
 Approaches, lifts her with a sister's hand,
 Supports her fainting steps, herself the while
 As if in ecstasy, devoid of pain,
 Incredulous of torment yet begun:
 "When comes the beast? Send, Rusticus, and bring

My brother." Then to both, "Continue firm
And stedfast in the faith, in mutual love;
Fear not, nor stumble at our sufferings."

Hark!

The people clamour for the mortal scene. 310
So soon the gladiators? That was well;
Thank God for that! The parting kiss; and now
Swift death for whomsoe'er the beasts have left.
Unskilful youth! her adversary slain
In dreams of yesternight had conquered thee!
Strike home, thou quaking boy; not thus, not there!
Ah, needless wound! The throat, the throat! Whereat
In pity for herself, tho' more for him,
She guides his aimless blade, and falling thus
Dies.

.

O'er yon orient cape across the bay 320
Lo, sunrise ushers in my cherished hour
Of union with the saints. O breaking dawn,
O birth for ever old, for ever new,
Thou comest from that holy Syrian east,
Where Christ, the Resurrection and the Life,
In fashion as a Man, trod earth awhile,
Was martyred on the Cross, and rose again
From death, ascending in celestial might.
Teach me thy secret of eternal hope;
Let me, renewed and born again to-day, 330
Partaker of one grace with Christ's elect,
Begin that hallowed life which never dies.
Death is not. Evermore the ransomed live,
On earth, in Paradise, in Heaven at last,

One fellowship, howe'er by time and fate
Divided here; saints, martyrs, rich or poor,
Youth, age, the gentle, simple, bond or free,
Male, female; ay, the gaoler and his wards,
The meek slave woman and the noble dame,
Alike in bondage at the sovran feet
Of Christ, glad captives of redeeming Love.

340

S. AIDAN

A POEM

WHICH OBTAINED THE SEATONIAN PRIZE
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
IN 1903

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM ROWNTREE, M.A.

VICAR OF WRAWBY, LINCOLNSHIRE
AND LATE EXHIBITIONER OF CLARE COLLEGE

“Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.

.

Therefore to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself,
And at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd, to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.”

M. ARNOLD, *Rugby Chapel.*

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S. AIDAN.

“Γέλτονα δ’ ἐκκάλεσεν Διὸς ὑψίστου προφάταν ἔξοχον
ὀρθόμαντιν.”

PINDAR, *Nem.* i. 60-1 (ed. Don.).

As went my master from Iona¹ forth
To preach the Gospel of the Crucified
At Oswald's pious call, so come I now
(Since Wulfhere seeks a bishop for his realm)
From Lastingham, my too brief respite o'er,
Albeit no second Aidan, only Chad,
His most unworthy pupil.

Musing here
In Lichfield, on the threshold of my toil
For Christ in Mercia, let me once again,
As erst at York, set over Aidan's charge, 10
His own Northumbria, never dreaming then
Of interrupted work, four winters back,²
Hold up that bright exemplar to my gaze,
If humblest emulation might reflect

¹ The writer has ventured to retain the modern form *Iona* as being better known, as well as more poetical, than the *Hy* of Bede. In some other cases, where neither the older nor the modern name appeared suitable (*e.g.* Heruteu, Hartlepool; Strenaeshaleh, Whitby), a paraphrase of the Anglo-Saxon form has been used. See lines 225-6.

² For the dates, see Bright, *Early Eng. Ch. Hist.*, pp. 213, 229, and notes (ed. 1878).

Fresh fragments of his light. In very sooth
 A bishop, a true shepherd of the sheep,
 A chosen vessel of the grace of God,
 And in the Spirit's unction from above
 Sagacious to win souls by winning hearts;
 All gentleness, and sweet humility, 20
 And patience, and affections weaned from earth,
 And saintly self-restraint, and inward peace,
 And love, and wise discretion; owning naught
 (His treasure stored in other worlds than here)
 Beyond a prophet's chamber, and the glebe
 Around his rustic church; nor seeking aught
 But souls to save, and duties to perform,
 And charities to do; despising greed,
 Hate, anger, pride, vain-glory; living out,
 As ever in his dear Creator's eye, 30
 No breach betwixt the precept and the life,
 A creed none other than the creed he taught.

And apt he was to teach. But yesterday,
 Methinks, we sate disciples round his feet
 At Lindisfarne, a group of eager lads
 Intent upon his words of hallowed lore,
 The lore that speaks of everlasting life,
 That makes its hearers to salvation wise
 Thro' faith in Jesus. In those fruitful years
 Devotion to the teacher sprang from awe, 40
 Then blossomed into love, while day by day
 With sweet assiduous toil and clerkly care
 We copied or rehearsed some precious roll
 Of manuscript, or with the master held
 High converse on the ways of Providence,
 Man's fall, the promise, the long centuries
 Of waiting, the Redeemer's life and Cross,
 The Resurrection joy, the Spirit's dower

Of peace past understanding. Happy time
 Of seed in youthful hearts divinely sown, 50
 The reaping, here begun, to close in Heaven
 With rescued souls for increase! Grant them, Lord,
 To me.

'Twas our delight attending him
 (High privilege for any, clerk or lay,
 Chosen or chance companions, old or young)
 On apostolic missions, near and far,
 Along the highways and the sunny fields,
 Thro' tith and town, o'er wold and wilderness,
 By many a smiling homestead, holt, or grange,
 Each conning, as we walked, some holy text, 60
 Or some refreshing psalm; and in the midst
 A venerable figure moving on,
 The sandalled feet, the tunic, and the cape,
 Whose hood, thrown haply backward, would reveal
 The Scottish crescent on his tonsured head,
 The floating hair behind. And whomsoe'er
 We met, the man of God saluted them
 With question of their faith or heathenry,
 Exhorting these to seek the Saviour's Cross,
 And those to shine more brightly still for Him. 70

Endue me with the grace of gentleness,
 O Lord my God, the might of gentleness,
 Omnipotent thro' charity to draw
 Lost souls. Of Aidan's virtues, all from Thee,
 Surely the noblest and the best was this,
 A beautiful discretion, born of love,
 A great compassion, born of sympathy,
 That understands and spares, as being itself
 Encompassed with infirmities. Be mine
 That voice which in the council gave reply, 80

When Corman, home returning in despair
 Of any fruit for Christ in English hearts,
 Against the rude Northumbrian populace
 Made scornful accusation. Milk for babes;
 And surely those were babes, requiring draughts
 Of easy doctrine, ere they grew to taste
 Full-grown perfection. Too precipitate!
 Man's wrath works not the righteousness of God;
 The soul's disorder needs a softer touch;
 Old garments take amiss the sudden patch; 90
 Old bottles waste new wine.

Yet wicked men

Feared this mild saint, for he was resolute
 And stern in righteous anger against sin,
 Rebuking avarice and cruelty
 Without respect of persons. If the rich
 Gave gold, he straightway lent it to the Lord,
 Casting his bread upon the tide of time,
 To find it, after many days, in Heaven.
 The sick, the poor, the widow, blessed his name;
 Slaves, ransomed at his bounty, leaped to life 100
 And freedom, took the Saviour's easier yoke,
 Bore His light burden with rejoicing hearts;
 While some, beneath their benefactor's hand
 Attaining holy priesthood, issued forth
 Ambassadors of Christ. How had he mourned,
 If living yet, that scandal of the see
 By Wini (him whose consecrating hand
 Once rested on this head) from Wulfhere bought,
 This Mercian, whose behest I now fulfil!
 God grant them penitence. If courtiers came 110
 With itching palm, or thanes with artful talk
 That angled for a gift, no venal bribe,
 Miscalled a blessing, e'er would Aidan give;

But hospitable greeting, board or bed,
A kindly benediction on their way,
No more.

And one there was, the blameless king,
Who loved him with an ever constant love,
Who brought him from his island of the west
To find by nature,¹ to create by grace,
Iona's image in our eastern isle. 120
For after Heathfield (rather *heathen*-field!)²
Undid, with Edwin's death, Paulinus' work,
Came pagan chaos, persecution, flight,
Apostasy, that year of evil fame
With kingly traitors blotted from the page
Of chronicle; till hand in hand arose
Another monarch and another priest,
Josiah with Hilkiah come again,
Oswald with Aidan. O the golden reign
Between two shocks of battle, first and last! 130
Heaven-field indeed, the triumph of the saints;
Heaven-field indeed, the cross before the crown,
The wooden cross that wins an earthly crown;
Anon the crown interpreting the Cross,
Hushed crowds attentive while a king translates
A bishop's exhortation. And, alas,
How like Josiah's end! 'Our nostrils' breath,
Our shadowing refuge from the pagan hordes,
The Lord's anointed, snared in heathen toils.'³

¹ On the natural resemblance between Iona and Lindisfarne, and the pleasure which that resemblance would give to S. Aidan, see Bright, *Early Eng. Ch. Hist.*, p. 137, and notes. The spiritual resemblance produced by him is alluded to by C. Kingsley, *The Hermits*, p. 289 (ed. 1875).

² See Trench, *Study of Words*, p. 131 (ed. 1876). An inevitable play upon the word, even if the name had no intentionally deeper significance, as in *Heavenfield* according to Bede (III. 2).

³ Lam. iv. 20.

How like Josiah's end! Megiddo turned
 To Maserfield, another cross and crown,
 The warrior's agony, the martyr's crown.
 So runs my fancy.

140

Thus together wrought,
 Restorers of old paths wherein to walk,
 These twain, one heart and soul, their people's good.
 New preachers hurry from the wondering west
 To join the glad revival. Everywhere
 New sanctuaries, of sovran bounty built,
 Re-echo to the voice of multitudes
 In praise and prayer, or hushed in listening awe 150
 Bear witness to the Word. Monastic walls
 Requite their princely founder in the love
 Of learning, and the light of holiness.
 A reminiscence I would fain recall,
 Heard often with delight from Aidan's lips,
 Of Oswald in his pity for the poor
 One Easter noon, when in the banquet-hall
 They feasted, and before the monarch stood
 A silver dish with regal dainties heaped;
 And ere the bishop and the king could raise 160
 Their hands in blessing, lo, there enters in
 A thane, the royal almoner, with news:
 The needy folk are gathered in the streets
 Imploring alms; whereat the king commands
 The meal, untasted yet, be straightway sent
 To feed the beggars, yea, the dish itself
 Divided into largess for the crowd.
 Up rises Aidan, filled with pious awe,
 And grasping the king's hand with tears of joy,
 Cries, "Never, never may this hand decay, 170
 For such a deed!" A prophecy? Why not?

Have not these eyes in Bebba's town beheld,
 Yet uncorrupted,¹ Oswald's arm and hand,
 Hacked off to glut the victor's fiendish hate,
 Within their silver casket in the church?

For if the blessings and the prayers of saints
 Prevail with God, each benediction brings,
 Each intercession its due sequel finds,
 In nature as in grace. If hallowed oil,
 My master's supplications helping it, 180
 Be cast upon the waves in Uttā's voyage,
 Behold the billows hushed, the storm a calm.²
 A miracle? Or if the strong south-west³
 Waft the red ravage of marauding fire
 Against those oaken ramparts by the sea,
 While Aidan, watching from his isle, exclaims,
 "See, Lord, what ruin Penda's fury works,"
 Lo, suddenly the gale is opposite,
 The blaze recoils in havoc and defeat
 On the besiegers' heads. A prodigy? 190
 Say rather that God hears and answers prayer,
 The footsteps of Whose ways are in the deep,
 Who rides upon the pinions of the blast,
 Who makes the viewless winds His messengers,
 Yea, the devouring flame His minister,
 Who speaks in awful thunder out of Heaven

¹ The writer has, after some hesitation, included a reference to two or three of the simpler miracles ascribed to S. Aidan, without which his portraiture seems incomplete. S. Chad would, doubtless, share in the general credulity, which even the cultured Bede could not resist. On the efficacy attributed to intercessions and benedictions by the Celtic missionaries, see Bright, *Early Eng. Ch. Hist.*, p. 145.

² For the natural explanation, see Bright, *Waymarks*, p. 282.

³ The coast-line at Bamborough faces north-east, not due east. For the walls of timber see Bright, *Early Eng. Ch. Hist.*, p. 156; C. Kingsley, *The Hermits*, p. 290. Bamborough, i.e. queen Bebba's town.

(As haply from yon storm-rack drifting up),¹
 Utters His voice, and that a mighty voice,
 And hurls dread shafts of lightning on His foes;
 Who surely will return with clouds and fire 200
 In fearful majesty to judge the world.
 Lord, grant all sinners grace to search our hearts,
 And purify our lives, and turn to Thee,
 While yet Thy mercy spares.

Then Oswin came;
 So tender, such a sweet humility
 Seemed scarce of earth. Too surely was fulfilled
 That omen of the gentle king's remorse,
 Imploring pardon at my master's feet
 For some slight word of anger or surprise
 About a palfrey with rich housings trapped, 210
 The monarch's gift, which Aidan, lacking gold,
 Bestowed upon a beggar. "Not for long
 Can such a monarch live. A lowly king
 Until this hour I never yet beheld;
 Worthier a throne above than here below."
 Too soon fulfilled; a jealous rival's will,
 A traitor's work.

And holy women too
 Revered and loved our Aidan, from his lips
 Drew counsel, inspiration, caught the fire
 Of heavenward impulse, at his willing hands 220
 Accepted consecration, and the veil
 That shuts the world out from devoted lives,

¹ For S. Chad's peculiar susceptibility to impressions from wind and storm, and his habit on such occasions, see Bede iv. 3, and a noble passage in Jer. Taylor's *Life of Christ*, Discourse xviii.; also the concluding lines of the present poem.

And keeps them for the Lord. Thus Hilda came,
 Our prophetess, our dame in Israël,
 Our abbess of Hart's Isle,¹ migrating thence
 To new foundations, where the Beacon Bay,²
 Its great bluff crested with monastic homes,
 Fronts the Northumbrian deep.

But Oswin dies;

And Aidan's gentle spirit ill can bear
 Its horror and its heartbreak in a frame 230
 Made weak by toil and discipline. Two kings,
 Two saintly kings, cut off before their prime
 Thro' battle, murder; it was terrible.
 O master, in the pent-house lying there
 Against the buttress of thy little church,
 Just twelve days after, ending simply thus
 Thy simple life!

Tho' dead, he speaks. Report,
 Example, memory, the pervading charm,
 Incalculable and inarticulate,
 Which issues from careers of holiness, 240
 Live on, live ever, infinite in time
 As limitless in space. The magic power
 Grows epidemic. Irresistibly
 Tho' silently, that high contagion flies
 From soul to soul, inflaming all who knew
 Saints, living or by rumour, with desire
 Of hallowed emulation. Miracles?
 Ay, miracles again, if such they be.
 Amidst invading fire that oaken beam
 He leaned upon remains unburnt and whole 250
 Once, twice, the church a wreck;³ no marvel there,

¹ Hartlepool.

² Whitby.

³ See the probable explanation in C. Kingsley, *The Hermits*, p. 291.

Himself so firm a stanchion of the faith,
Himself a greater miracle than all.

Lord, grant us many such as Aidan was,
And Chad, his meanest follower, grace to grow
More worthy such a master.

* * * * *

Overhead,
While here I ponder on the retrospect,
God's testimony, vocal in the roar
Of storm and deluge with an argument
Beyond all speech, is bidding guilty souls 260
Repent. I will arise and pray the Lord,
Who sits above the waterfloods a King,
To send His contrite people strength and peace.¹

¹ See line 197, and note.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

A POEM

WHICH OBTAINED THE SEATONIAN PRIZE
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
IN 1906

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM ROWNTREE, M.A.

VICAR OF WRAWBY, LINCOLNSHIRE
AND LATE EXHIBITIONER OF CLARE COLLEGE

"God's gift was, that man should conceive of truth,
And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake
As midway help, till he reach fact indeed.
The statuary, ere he mould a shape,
Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea, and next
The aspiration to produce the same ;
So, taking clay, he calls his shape thereout,
Cries ever, 'Now I have the thing I see,'
Yet all the while goes changing what was wrought,
From falsehood like the truth, to truth itself."

R. BROWNING, *A Death in the Desert.*

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THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

“Ἐν μὲν ἄρα τοῖς παθήμασιν οὐκ ἔνι ἐπιστήμη, ἐν δὲ τῷ περὶ
ἐκείνων συλλογισμῷ· οὐσίας γὰρ καὶ ἀληθείας ἐνταῦθα μὲν, ὥς ἔοικε,
δυνατὸν ᾗψασθαι, ἐκεῖ δὲ ἀδύνατον.”

PLATO, *Theæt.* 186 D.

This marvel of the woman at the well,
And living water by the living Christ
To that poor alien sinful heretic
Proclaimed, I John, the son of Zebedee,
The Lord's Apostle, speaking face to face,
Heard from the lips of the Samaritan
Herself, when Jesus for two days abode
In Sychar, reaping the white harvest there
Himself had sown; repeated once again
Years after, when with Peter I went down, 10
And to the zealous Deacon lending aid,
Upon Samaria's converts (fire from Heaven?
Yea, by the manner of the spirit changed
To Pentecostal flame) we laid our hands.¹
There having found her in her pious home,
Devoted, eager, steadfast in the faith
Which overcomes the world, in fellowship
With Christ, and walking in the light of truth,
Abiding in the Father and the Son,
Confessing Jesus as the Word of life 20
Made manifest for sins, her own forgiven
In His dear name, a consecrated soul,

¹ Acts viii. 14-17.

Aglow with ardent memories of that day
 Beside the well of Jacob, I drew forth
 Her tale a second time for certitude;
 Which, well remembered yet, an aged man,
 Long tarrying for my Saviour by the banks
 Of clear Cayster, on this Asian shore
 At Ephesus, while gathering of the Life
 Each unrecorded fragment, I set down,
 Thereto by many saints and hearers urged,
 Here in this last Evangel.

30

Simple facts
 And spoken words alone are written thus;
 All else, her agonies of self-reproach,
 My contemplations all that ample time,
 As things incapable of ink and pen,
 Omitted.

How they crowd upon me now,
 Stirred into clear remembrance as I muse!
 The very scene: the vale that opens out
 'Twixt Ebal and Gerizim into fields
 Preparing for the sickle; the bright sky;
 The thirsty noon; the wide stone-bordered well;
 The solitary Figure, travel-spent,
 Just where we left Him seated on the marge,
 While foraging for food we ranged the town
 Distant a little space.

40

Life's crises come
 Insensibly, with unperceived approach.
 The one day that eclipses other days
 Dawns, broadens into light, like other days;

The crucial hour that holds a destiny 50
 Arrives untrumpeted. One passes by,
 While three beside the brink of Jordan stand;
 "Behold the Lamb of God," the Baptist cries,
 "Who takes away the sins of all the world;"
 And lo, for Andrew and for me the Christ
 In that chance moment! Many a time at noon
 (At noon, mayhap, to cheat suspicious eyes
 And busy tongues) that woman came to draw,
 The pitcher on her shoulder. Never hint
 Of this day's wonder crossed her heedless mood, 60
 As carolling she went. For light she was,
 Unstable, shallow, to caprice a slave,
 Irresolute alike in heart and will,
 To vagrant fancies and forbidden loves,
 Undisciplined emotions, idle dreams,
 An easy prey.

To rescue such He came,
 To bring them out of darkness into light,
 Who sate there waiting.¹ Even as on the Cross,
 Yearning to see the travail of His soul,
 And be therewith content, "I thirst," He cried, 70
 So to the sinners whom He came to save
 Those parched lips of the Crucified appeal,
 "My son, My daughter, give thine heart to Me,
 For that alone can satisfy My thirst,"
 So to this erring woman by the well,
 "Give Me to drink."

She knew not all He meant,
 Nor could know. Did she grant the cooling draught,
 As to the messenger at Haran's fount

¹ "Quaerens me sedisti lassus."

Thomas of Celano, *De Novissimo Judicio*, 28.

Rebekah granted?¹ wash His weary feet
 With water, as with tears of penitence
 Another sinful woman like herself
 Did after?² But her glance revealed a Jew,
 No doubt some scornful hater of her race,
 Nursing that ancient quarrel, tho' the look,
 The voice, were gentle, seeking at her hand
 This trifle. And as one whose manner was
 To speak each thought, not hiding her surprise
 With womanly reserve, in meek suspense
 And mute compliance: "How can any Jew
 Ask thus from a Samaritan?"

80

She waits

Expectant, unabashed. Then slowly came
 His answer with a grave and stately grace;
 As when some monarch lays his crown aside,
 And fares amongst his people in disguise,
 To try them, should the stranger find rebuff
 Or question, here a gesture, there a word,
 Some dark enigma with a double sense,
 Some hint of a disclosure by-and-by,
 Restores the true relation, rights the wrong,
 Perplexing the dull swain. "Didst thou perceive
 God's gift, and Who this favour asks of thee,
 Thou wert the suppliant, He the giver then
 Of living water."

90

100

Solemnly the words

Were uttered, with a tense and searching gaze,
 The body's weariness, the body's thirst,
 Forgotten in the joy before Him set
 Of saving a lost soul. Herself the while,

¹ Gen. xxiv. 18.

² S. Luke vii. 38.

A victim to the letter, spirit-blind,
 And living on the surface of a life
 With no deep meaning, finds no meaning here 110
 Below the level of a fleshly need.
 His literal thirst she sees and understands,
 Her own soul's drought unfelt. And who was He,
 This patronizing Jew, their parts reversed,
 Bestowing where He begged? Self-love retorts,
 Scarce hid behind a veil of irony,
 "Thou hast no vessel, Sir; the well is deep;
 Whence then this living water? Does thy power
 Exceed our ancestor's, who gave the spring,
 Jacob, who drank thereof, and all his house 120
 And cattle?"

Petulant in part she spake,
 And partly curious, while the Lord perused
 Her changeful heart. The petty sarcasm all
 Unnoticed as His own forgotten thirst,
 He waives the question to provoke the want,
 Unconscious yet. His Nature and His Name
 Will find a revelation soon or late;
 Her need was paramount. "Whoever drinks
 The water of this well shall thirst again;
 But whoso drinks the water that I give, 130
 He shall not thirst again for evermore,
 But evermore that water shall become
 Within his heart a fountain springing up
 To life eternal."

Understanding not,
 She listens. On her callous heart the seed
 Of truth falls idly. Sense and outward things,
 The darkness chosen rather than the light,

And conscience laid asleep, and scruples put
 To silence, till the very thought of sin,
 Intolerable first, potential soon,
 Turns actual, and from act repeated oft
 Grows easy custom, these (a common tale)
 Have paralysed all holier faculties
 Of soul and spirit, earthly meaner cares
 Alone surviving. Half in mockery,
 Half earnest, yearning for she knows not what,
 "Why, give me then this water, Sir," she cries,
 "And let me thirst no longer, nor each day
 Toil hither for supply."

140

Small comfort there,
 If that were all! Will nothing pierce the veil
 Of earth-bound sense, that clings about her soul
 And blinds it? Interruption, startling change,
 Some sudden query probing to the core
 A life's foul secret? With a stedfast look,
 "Go, call thy husband, and return," He said.

150

Her husband! An involuntary shock
 For just one instant sends the mantling shame
 In tumult o'er her cheek. A moment more
 Persuades her that no stranger can divine
 Her story; while truth's counterfeit in word
 Falsters, "I have no husband."

160

Calmly then
 Made answer the supreme unerring Truth,
 Who sees all hearts, nor needs He witness borne
 To man, well knowing what man's nature holds
 Of good and evil, "Thou hast answered well
 'No spouse;' for after five who called thee wife,

There follows but a loose and lawless bond,
Not wedlock. Truly said."

Aghast she stands.

A Prophet! Everything that e'er she did,
The thoughtless life, the guilty love, laid bare! 170
Nay, more (tho' from her knowledge hidden yet),
Before that pitiful Almighty gaze
Each inarticulate emotion clear,
The soul's reluctant yet awakening thirst,
The disillusion and the tragedy,
Connubial happiness and virtue lost,
The past a sin, the present a suspense,
The future a surrender, heart and life,
For all brave seeming, to the Christ indeed
And Saviour of the world.

Surrender waits 180

While wonder and evasion say their say,
Forget the practice in the principle,
The conduct in the creed. Not "Do the will,
The doctrine proves itself," as Jesus said;¹
Rather divert attention from the sin
By questions of the doctrine, easier far
Than penitential change. A golden chance,
Moreover, since the lamp of prophecy
Revives, and open vision comes again,
To find authentic answer to the doubt 190
Which service were acceptable to God,
Samaritan or Jewish. "Sir, I ween,
Thou art a Seer. Our fathers worshipped God
Upon this mount Gerizim; but ye say
That from Jerusalem alone can come
Meet worship."

¹ S. John vii. 17.

Will He take her ventured hint?
 Accept or waive the challenge? heal the feud
 Of ages, or decline a fruitless task?
 Or rather, while asserting needful truth,
 Raise controversy to serener heights 200
 Of argument, and issues wider yet
 Than any dreamed of? Universal faith,
 Illimitable worship, every spot
 The centre of a circle with its are
 Fixed nowhere! So the long contention yields
 To that old prophecy, that everywhere
 Prayer's incense and an offering uncorrupt
 Should in Jehovah's name ascend.¹ "An hour,
 Believe me, woman, comes when neither here
 Upon this hill, nor in Jerusalem, 210
 Shall God be worshipped. What ye worship here
 Ye know not; what we worship well we know,
 For from the Jews alone salvation springs.
 The destined hour is coming, is now come,
 When all true worshippers will worship God
 In spirit and in truth; such worshippers
 The Father seeks. God is Himself a Spirit,
 And all who worship God must worship Him
 In spirit and in truth."

Profoundly moved,
 Perplexity contending with vague hope, 220
 And all her nobler self awake at last,
 She stood. The wasting quarrel of His race
 With hers, embittered thro' the centuries,
 Grows futile in the large and lucid scope
 Of such a golden time, if only sure,
 How welcome! All her nature could respond
 To that high sequel, were it only sure.

¹ Mal. i. 11.

But how decide? Samaritan and Jew
 Were waiting for Messiah, she for one
 A prophet only, not a priest or king, 230
 But haply some "Restorer."¹ Would she see
 That glory? Was that blessedness for her
 Yet living, these enigmas all at rest?
 Blind, helpless, feeling for the light and truth,
 "I know Messiah, which is called the Christ,
 Is coming," she replies, "and having come,
 Will tell us all things."

"I that speak am He."

Calmly the words were uttered, wondrous words
 Of old yet ever new significance
 In hearts that can receive them. To no ring 240
 Of scoffing Pharisees or haughty priests,
 Not even to the Galilean throng
 That heard Him gladly, did the tidings come,
 Which angels, o'er the battlement of Heaven
 Leaning in multitudes of bright array,
 With rapture hailed; but here beside a well
 To this one sinner of an alien race
 Despised and hated; and again, ere long,
 To that lone exile of the synagogue
 Born blind, yet in Siloah's pool restored.² 250

Thy words indeed are spirit and are life,
 Incarnate Word, from the beginning God,
 Seen, heard, and handled here a little while
 In earthly tabernacle, manifest

¹ Or "Converter" (*Hashab*). On the somewhat obscure question of the Samaritan Messiah, see Westcott, *Study of the Gospels* (sixth ed.), pp. 163-4; and J. B. Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays* (1893), pp. 154-5.

² S. John ix. 37.

By blood and water, to redeem a world
 Which lies in darkness and that Evil One.
 Thy words, O Lord, are spirit and are life,
 Truth absolute, and righteousness, and love
 Supreme, and holy peace, and unction linked
 With knowledge. If one only, quite alone, 260
 This woman, or the Doctor in the night,
 Or that blind beggar, heard Thy deeper speech,
 Lest such an utterance die, for ever lost
 In blank oblivion, on the parchment here
 I bear my witness, here for all the Church
 I write it.

Did we dare to question Him
 In that amazing moment of return,
 "What seekest or why speakest Thou with her,
 A Rabbi with a woman?" Nay, not one;
 Faith, awe forbade. But she, with herald feet 270
 Among the mountains beautiful and swift,
 Vase, water, in her haste alike forgot,
 Glad tidings of Messiah's holy reign
 Proclaims in Sychar: "Come, behold a man
 Who testifies of all that e'er I did;
 Can this be Christ?" No marvel He foregoes
 All food, the body's hunger, like its thirst,
 Unfelt while saving souls. To do the will
 Of One who sent Him, yea, the finished work,
 Were meat enough. Four months to reaping yet 280
 (He said), but lo, yon pathway thro' the corn
 Alive with eager souls, for harvest ripe,
 That hasten to the sickle! Reap or sow,
 What matter? Where another sows we reap,
 And unto life eternal gather fruit;
 One day the sower and the reaper both

Will joy together. Where we laboured not,
 God gives us ample guerdon. Others sowed,
 We reap, and enter an inheritance
 Bequeathed of old by prophet, saint, and sage. 290

And Oh! to see those poor Samaritans
 Around the dear Lord Jesus, old and young,
 Some children, many thro' the woman's tale
 Believing, "everything that e'er she did,"
 And all expectant, anxious, was a scene
 Remembered sixty years. In gentlest words,
 Whose import only can I now recall,
 And the divine entreaty pleading there,
 He told the self-same message which before
 We heard from the beginning, that in God 300
 Is light, no darkness, hatred, or a lie;
 Pure love, and truth assured, Himself sent forth
 As God's Anointed witness of the truth
 Both to Samaritans and Jews alike,
 And others haply too. This promise then
 And this command we from the Father have,
 That if, believing Jesus as the Christ,
 And in His name fulfilling righteousness,
 We love, not hate, each other, we receive
 Forgiveness, life eternal.

Nor in vain 310
 A little while at their behest He stayed
 Among them, the two days we tarried there
 So fruitful in the grace of softened hearts.
 Days of the Son of Man, too quickly sped,
 How rich in precious opportunity
 Beyond all fabled worth, O days with Christ,

Of rubies or of pearls! how sacred held
 In many a life and memory thenceforth
 Transfigured into light and happiness
 Unknown to those inhospitable churls 320
 On whom in after time (forgive me, Lord)
 I fain in jealous anger had invoked
 Heaven's fire!

And so that eager "Come and see,"
 From such unwonted missionary lips,
 Nay, rather an effectual "Taste and see
 How gracious is the Lord to trusting souls,"¹
 Was answered from experimental depths
 Of thankful joy: "Now, sister, we believe
 Not thy report alone; ourselves have heard
 His wondrous teaching, and acknowledge Him 330
 The very Christ, the Saviour of the world."

Ay, taste and see. The Spirit and the Bride
 Invite. And whosoever is athirst
 In all the world, uncovenanted hosts
 Of Israel not according to the flesh,
 Nor any will of man, but God's elect
 And heirs of glory, bid, O bid them come
 And freely, without money, without price,
 Drink here below the Saviour's heavenly gift
 Of grace abounding, ere in Heaven itself, 340
 Transformed into the likeness of the Lord,
 And satisfied therewith, yea, seeing Him,
 True God and Life Eternal, as He is,
 They quaff the waters of the living stream,
 As crystal clear, from out the sapphire throne
 Of God and of the Lamb proceeding forth

¹ Psalm xxxiv. 8.

(Which once in rapt apocalyptic trance
 Amid the rocks of Patmos I beheld),
 And thirst no longer. There Samaritan,
 Jew, Gentile, all who worshipped the Supreme, 350
 Not at Gerizim or Jerusalem
 Nor any sole exclusive sanctuary,
 But everywhere, in spirit and in truth
 Uplifting grateful hearts and holy hands,
 Rejoice together; and among them she,
 The convert of the well; and he that once
 Was leprous, and returned to thank the Lord
 For healing;¹ and that other, feigned no more
 In parable,² but in full many a type
 Of neighbourly compassion and the love 360
 That stamps amid the discord of this world
 A true disciple of the lowly Christ,
 Made actual; while the rapture of their bliss
 Exceeds a thousandfold the joy³ when once
 Philip, and I with Peter, gathered in
 A second harvest, as the Lord foretold
 At Sychar thrice-a-score of years ago.

¹ S. Luke xvii. 15-16.² S. Luke x. 33.³ Acts viii. 8.

God's Distribution of Labour and Reward.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, AVENUE ROAD,

Regent's Park, N.W.

ON

SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 7, 1882,

BY

GEORGE W. ROWNTREE, M.A.,

*Curate of St. Stephen's ;
Late Exhibitioner of Clare College, Cambridge.*

PRINTED BY REQUEST.

* * This Sermon I print at the desire of the
*
Rev. E. H. Nelson, Vicar of St. Stephen's (a desire
approved by others), for the benefit of some members of
the Congregation who were not present when it was
preached. I trust that my acceding to so unexpected a
request will not be taken to mean that I am unconscious
of imperfections necessarily incident to rapid writing,
and to the usually fugitive nature of sermons.

G. W. R.

GOD'S DISTRIBUTION OF LABOUR AND REWARD.



1 *Samuel* xxx. 24 :—"As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike."



"THE growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts." Such is the true and just observation of a recent writer.* "And," the sentence continues, "that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs." These, my brethren, are deep and noble words; and they contain the main idea of the subject on which we shall speak to-night. The good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and "as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff." That the many who obey are helpful, are necessary to, are to be revered and honoured and acknowledged by, the few who command; that the masses who serve have a nobleness, a mission, as well as the individuals who lead; that the millions who toil are aiding the cause of humanity and of progress hardly less, though in another manner, than the hundreds who think; that those whose uneventful lives are quietly and unobtrusively spent in the faithful, thorough, conscientious, performance of the duties which lie nearest to them, are regarded, beloved, and will be rewarded by God, as well as those who are called to careers of lofty sacrifice and to deeds of daring and prominent heroism,—this is the great truth which, in whatever form expressed, is the subject of my text to-night. It is a theme of comfort and of hope. It is a lesson of contentment and humility. It savours of those blessed and priceless virtues, whose sphere is not the market place, the senate, or the camp, but rather the family routine, the home circle, the

* George Eliot *Middlemarch*, ad fin.

daily labour of the counting-house and the workshop, the "trivial round, the common task." And who is he that shall dare to despise such a sphere as this? Oh, believe me, in these things is the life of man's spirit; in ordinary duties well performed and uneventful days well spent; in the manifold acknowledgment of legitimate claims; in the brave God-fearing conflict with the average difficulties of existence; in the unrecorded heroisms of human love; in the grateful and invigorating self-denials of a happy home. And surely here is enough to more than amply occupy a man or woman. Let them not go far afield for a mission while these things are so near at hand. Here is a life to be lived; and it demands, peremptorily, in a voice not to be disregarded without peril, to be lived well, to the utmost of your faculty, and not to be scouted, or scamped, or huddled through slovenly, or skulked through sullenly, or turned into a low comedy of vulgar enjoyment; no, but to be acted as "a regal drama played out before the eyes of God and man." Well, I say, there is enough, and more than enough, to do. I know well that there are many easy lives, that is, lives which are being made easy in defiance of divine laws and human principles. But I say that no life *ought* to be easy. And if every man realised as he ought the meaning and responsibilities of even the obscurest existence, he would assuredly find enough to do and to avoid, enough perilous work, enough temptations to fight with and overcome, enough sins to bewail and repent of; he would be ready to cry, as one has done before—

"O keep me innocent; make others great."

It is this conviction of the dignity and the danger of even the most ordinary career, of its necessary rank and place in the grand sum total of humanity, just as even the least and most hidden stone is an integral and indispensable part of a mighty edifice, that I want to impress upon you. No lives are useless,—

"All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone."

"Every man in his own order, and Christ the first fruits," Christ the corner-stone and foundation. And what a life was His—the humility of it; the poverty; the obscurity; the apparent unimportance; the absolute meanness of it according to the worldly estimate. Yea, but has He not touched this obscure average humanity of ours with the finger of God, and transfigured it with ineffable glory, and lifted it into the seventh heaven of dignity and beauty? Is He not the God, the Saviour, the Representative, the Champion of the people?

"Has He not sanctified poverty by being born in a stable? Has He not by dying on the cross rendered suffering divine?"* There must ever be two great classes of men, the small and the great, the obscure and the illustrious, the poor and the rich; and to the former of them the immense majority of mankind must ever belong. Genius, ambition, prominent action, must ever be the destiny of the few. And as Christ must be the representative Man, or else He could not be the mediating Saviour, therefore He conformed His birth and His life to the lot of the many; He took upon Him the form of a servant, and became of no reputation. This, my brethren, is a blessed and a consoling truth, this, that Jesus Christ represents, feels for, is identified for ever with, the common fate of men. Who shall murmur now? Who shall repine at poverty, or obscurity, or mediocrity? Who shall be discontented or restless that he is not otherwise than he is? The disciple is not above his Master, the servant above his Lord. It is enough—ay, more than enough—if he be as his Master.

But before proceeding farther, let us ascertain the precise meaning and history of the text. Driven by the implacable hostility of Saul, David the outlaw found refuge among the Philistines, the traditional enemies of his country. Accompanied by his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, and his six hundred followers, he sought and obtained from Achish, the Philistine king, leave to settle at Ziklag. It reminds us of Themistocles among the Persians, and Coriolanus among the Volsci. For nearly a year and a half David and his men dwelt at Ziklag, making occasional raids upon the neighbouring tribes; and Achish began to congratulate himself upon the fidelity of his vassal, and his complete estrangement from his own nation. But soon another and a more decisive war arose between the Philistines and the Israelites; and David, as the feudatory vassal of King Achish, consented to march with his six hundred men in the Philistine army. Accordingly they set out for Aphek, the appointed mustering-place. But the confidence of Achish in David's good faith was not shared by the other chiefs of the Philistines, and in response to their complaints and warnings, Achish was constrained to dismiss the suspected Hebrew from his army. Back, therefore, to Ziklag David and his little band returned. But on their arrival there, what a scene met their eyes! The town was a mass of smoking ruins, and not a living creature was to be seen. During their absence the Amalekites had burst

* Père Hyacinthe, at Paris, 1879.

upon the place, burnt it to the ground, and carried off all the women and the spoil. And now for the first time the allegiance of David's followers began to waver, and in their indignation and grief they threatened to stone him to death. But he was equal to the occasion. Sending for the sacred ephod, he inquired the Divine will. The response was in favour of immediate pursuit. Setting out forthwith, he arrived at the brook Besor, in the extreme south of Palestine. Here two hundred out of his six hundred men were so exhausted that he was obliged to leave them behind, and push on without them. Guided by a half-famished Amalekite whom they met on the road, they came suddenly upon the enemy in their encampment, eating, drinking, and dancing in honour of their victory. Instantly David attacked them with his four hundred. From early dawn till sunset the slaughter lasted, till a complete victory was gained, and those who remained alive of the foe took to flight on swift camels. Recovering thus all the captives and lost property, besides an immense quantity of additional spoil, David and his company returned. And then it was that he showed in a marked manner the generous chivalry and innate justice of his character. In the division of the booty, his followers wished to exclude from any share the two hundred men who had been left at the brook Besor, and had not proceeded to the battle. But to so mean and illiberal a suggestion David will not listen for a moment. It was not their fault that they had stayed behind. They had the will, if not the power, to assist in the strife. In every battle there must be those who remain behind to guard the baggage, as well as those who gird on their swords for the fray, though, in this case, the cause of the remaining behind was not quite the same. It had been thus in the feud with Nabal; out of six hundred men, two hundred had mounted guard on the property, while the others armed themselves.* It was no doubt with a reminiscence of that occasion, and not perhaps without a thought that if a few of the warriors had been left at Ziklag when he marched with the Philistines the sacking of the place and captivity of the women and children might have been averted, that David determined to withstand the ungenerous intention of his followers. No; the quiet preservation of order at home is as needful as the battle abroad; defence at one point is as necessary as attack at another; and, without the former, the most brilliant victories of the latter may end in disappointment and loss. In this matter the one party supplements the other, is indispensable to the other. And as there is a division of responsibility and of labour, so shall there be a

* 1 Sam. xxv., 13.

division of reward: "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day."

Well, my brethren, let us see what we may learn from this episode in the life of David. Are not these things an allegory? May they not serve to remind us of the great principle that in the Church of Christ there is a division of labour? In that mystical body there are many members; and each member—mark this—each member has not the same office.* Shall the hand murmur because it is not the head? or shall the eye say to the foot, "I have no need of thee"? All are useful; but there are degrees of usefulness and of dignity. The sweet transatlantic poet who died the other day has told us the truth:—

"Nothing useless is or low,
Each thing in its place is best;
And what seems but idle show,
Strengthens and supports the rest."

Every system, whether divine or human, is founded on, and exists on, the due subordination and faithful respective performance of its members. The very angels of Heaven, each in his degree and order, each according to his capacity, speed on their several errands to do the will of God. It is the same with every institution of human society. The working of the whole depends on the due performance of each subordinate individual. We took our text from the instance of a battle. Who is it that gains the credit and the glory of a victory? Is it not the leader, and he alone, while they who fought for him are forgotten, at least by men? Yes, on every field of strife,

"Thousands bleed
To lift one hero into fame."

Yet, my brethren, the blood of those thousands was essential to the victory. Tennyson has told us an exquisite little tale of how the sailors under a certain cruel captain resolved to punish him by refusing to fight for him.† The enemy's frigate hove in sight. The English captain was joyous, eager for the fray, confident of victory. The men were ordered to the guns. The enemy fired a broadside, but there was no reply; then another, and another, and another; and each man stood beside his gun, and where he stood there he fell beneath the cannonade of the foe. In vain the captain raved, threatened, entreated. His reputation for honour, for courage, for naval skill, was at stake. And there and then

* See Rom. xii., 4—8; 1 Cor. xii.

† Tennyson, *The Captain*.

they had their revenge; they "sold him unto shame," and they and he perished alike. It is an illustration of the interdependence of work, the need of division of labour, the necessity of the less to the fulfilment of the greater. My brethren, God does not require or even desire every man to be a hero; but He does expect every man and woman and child to do his or her duty where he is, each helping in the mighty machinery of His Church and world. As individuals, we are not cut off from the rest of our brethren. We are all one in body, one in spirit, one in faith, in hope, in love, in labour—above all, one in Christ Jesus, who is the Head and the exceeding great reward of all alike. Do not despair or despond about your life, however poor and unimportant it may perhaps seem to you. Your quota, how small and insignificant soever, is needful, indispensable to the good of God's world; and, believe me, it is neither small nor insignificant in the sight of Him. You know not what, in His great scheme of providence, may not depend on you and your life and your work: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of one of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." "The millstreams," it has been said,—“that turn the wheels of the world arise in solitary places.”* And so it is. Yet how utterly unconscious is the stream of the magnitude of its destiny. My brethren, be humble and hopeful about your life and labour. Neither fret, nor sulk, nor rebel, nor desist. Do not do nothing, just because you cannot do everything. Do not, like Naaman, turn and go away in a rage because you are not required to do some great thing. Others may bathe in Abana and Pharpar. It is appointed for you but to wash in despised Jordan; and doing thus, you shall be clean. Do not trouble to imagine what might be. The fact for you and me is that which is.

“The common problem, yours, mine, everyone's,
Is not to fancy what were fair in life,
Provided it could be; but finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means—a very different thing.”†

To most persons of vivid imagination and quick sensibility comes that plausible seductive temptation, "Cast thyself down. He shall give His angels charge concerning thee. Tempt the providence of God by quitting the place where He has put you." Ah, yes; what we are, what we have, seems ever dull, insipid, distasteful. Heroism is oftentimes easier than quiet duty. Even martyrdom seems more attractive than routine. It is harder just to rule one's spirit than to take a

* Sir A. Helps.

† R. Browning, *Bishop Blugram's Apology*.

city. A young man comes to Christ, full of seeming devotion, conscious of good life and good intentions, eager to do and dare, panting for high designs, prominent service, extravagant praise. "Thus and thus have I done; what hast Thou more for me to do? What lack I yet? Give me some great, some heroic work." And what is the commission he receives? Only this, "Sell all thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." And he departed sorrowful. He could have done far more ostentatious things; he could not do *that*. An exorcised demoniac sits at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. He begs to share the life of his Benefactor, its toils, its dangers, its triumphs, its rewards. No. To such a man, after such a benefit, to do that were easy. Gratitude, emulation, public opinion, would nerve him easily to all that. He must do something far harder. "Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee." Exhibit the spirit and the love of Christ in your family circle. Let your gratitude take the form of pious unobtrusive private life. Do not covet notoriety. Let your heroism be the heroism of obscurity. Let your triumphs be the triumphs of domestic virtues. Let your acceptable sacrifice be the self-denials of home love and forbearance. Be this your testimony to Christ, showing how great things He has done for you, teaching others, by the silent irresistible rhetoric of example, to come to Him. Ah, yes, my brethren, it is this which is so hard, just because it seems so easy and so unambitious. Great actions are stimulated and fed by the love of admiration and of praise; and this desire of admiration, as has well been said, is "strongest with regard to those by whom we are least known and least cared for. It is loud on the hustings, gay in the ball-room, but mute and sullen at the family fire-side."* It is easier to go down to the battle than it is to tarry by the stuff, and be content with that service. Yet this latter is precisely what the vast majority of us are required to do. Our work, our God-sent work, is close at hand. It is in the home, the street, the workshop.

"The primal duties shine aloft like stars;
The charities that soothe and heal and bless,
Lie scattered at the feet of men, like flowers."†

God will judge us, not by our brilliance, but by our honesty. "An ounce of love," said John Wesley "is worth a pound of knowledge." And John Wesley was right. Let us do our work, which is God's work, wherever we are, what-

* Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection: On Spiritual Religion*.

† Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Book IX.

ever it be. Our biographies will never be written; but our names will be inscribed in the Book of Life, God's great biography. It is no shame to have humble duty; but it is a great shame not to do that duty well. It is no disgrace to make shoes, but it is a great disgrace to make bad shoes. And, my brethren, every man may, by God's grace, have in him a great soul, the spirit, if not the actual life, of a hero or a martyr. There may be in each of us the dynamic force, the potentiality, the possibility of great things, the latent germ, though unexercised and perhaps unknown to all but God. When the Duke of Wellington visited his old school and saw the boys at play in games of bravery and skill, he exclaimed, "It was here that Waterloo was won."

And that reminds me. One word about woman's work. I hardly dare to speak of it, so sacred and so noble a thing it is. If it be her special mission to tarry behind, while man goes forth to the battle of life; if it be, as one has sung,

"Man for the field, and woman for the hearth;
Man for the sword, and for the needle she,"*

who shall venture to despise a destiny so gracious, and at the same time so transcendently responsible, far beyond any work of man? To the influence, to the empire, of a good woman there is practically no limit. It is hardly too much to say, that the destiny of the world is in the hands of its women. It is theirs to smooth and humanise the rougher elements of man's life. Above all, to them falls the early training of childhood and of youth. What the next generations of Englishmen are to be will mainly depend on what English mothers make them; and "one good mother is worth a hundred schoolmasters."† Napoleon was once asked what France most needed, and he answered, "Good mothers."

My brethren, I have done. Be it ours to recognise and to fulfil each his or her allotted task, faithfully, efficiently, cheerfully, "as ever in our great Taskmaster's eye," whether it be high or low, great or small, famous or obscure, going up to the battle, or only tarrying behind with the stuff. So shall we be fellow-labourers together with each other, and with God in Christ Jesus. So, whether we have borne the burden and heat of the day, or whether our path has lain "along the cool sequestered vale" of humbler and less commanding services, we shall reap at last, each after his kind, each in his due degree; we shall in no wise lose our reward.

* Tennyson, *The Princess*, Cant. V. † George Herbert.



9

WORK FOUND AND DONE.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN

St. Stephen's Church, Avenue Road,
REGENT'S PARK, N.W.,

ON

SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 24TH, 1881.

AFTER THE DEATH OF

THE EARL OF BEACONSFIELD,

BY

GEORGE W. ROWNTREE, M.A.,

*Curate of St. Stephen's;
Late Exhibitioner of Clare College, Cambridge.*

PRINTED BY REQUEST.

Price Sixpence.

. In allowing this Sermon to appear in print (which I with some misgiving and at the request of my kind friend the Vicar of St. Stephen's, who was indulgent enough to express his approval of it, and at once offered to undertake its publication), I have only to point to its numerous and manifest defects, in proof of the great haste with which it was thrown together, almost at the last moment before preaching, without, of course, the slightest idea that it would ever assume a more permanent shape.

G. W. R.

WORK FOUND AND DONE.

Ecclesiastes ix. 10 :—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

"*Pereunt et imputantur*,"—"The hours perish and are laid to our charge." Such is the brief but sententious motto inscribed on the dial at All Souls' College, Oxford. And it is worthy of the place. How long it has been there I know not ; but it is a world-old fact ; it is an utterance for all time. And this is the chief merit, the peculiar glory, of those paramount truths and commanding principles and great primary precepts of human life, that they are in their very essence eternal, universally applicable to all sorts and conditions and epochs of men. Such a precept is that of Solomon which I have chosen to-night. And it is a never-failing support and encouragement to us who live in these latter days, and will be so to those that shall come after, to know that the thoughts which occupy, the problems which perplex, the snares which environ, the hopes that cheer, the counsels that help, the consolations that strengthen us to-day, have been familiar to those who have trodden before us the steep and thorny path of life, it may be even thousands of years ago. Has not our spirit leaped for joy when, in the graphic pages of some master-mind, we have come suddenly upon a kindred thought long cherished in our own heart, which we imagined was peculiar to ourself, but which we rejoice to find shared by another ? Has not our heart burned within us when, even in sweet converse with a friend, we have unconsciously struck some chord of common feeling, which has been vibrating in both our hearts for many a year before, unheard by any save ourself ? Yes, an idea participated in, a point grasped, a difficulty appreciated by another, this is indeed the communion of minds (I had almost said the communion of saints) of every clime and every age, of every kindred and every nation.

Of this kind of universal sympathy there is perhaps more in the Book of *Ecclesiastes* than in any other. And the reason is

not far to seek. It is because the words of the wise man are true to nature and to experience; and to be true to nature and to experience is another name for showing the universal sympathy of which I speak. We feel instinctively drawn towards the man who, nearly three thousand years ago, in rich and varied tones, just tinged with the mournful shadow of

“Years that bring the philosophic mind,”

gave expression to the thoughts, the convictions, the hopes, the fears, the joys, the sorrows of this latest era of time. “That which hath been is that which shall be; and there is nothing new under the sun; and all things come alike to all; and all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” It is a solemn and touching thought, of this old man sitting down to record the ripe experience of a long and chequered existence. He has seen everything and known everything—the eager flush of youth, the calm conscious strength of manhood, the sad and querulous satiety of advancing age; the world with its advantages and perils, its golden chances and its treacherous pitfalls, its noble virtues and its hideous vices, its infinite possibilities of good and evil. He has known royalty and riches, and boundless empire and unchallenged authority, and the gratification of every desire, and dazzling fame and infallible wisdom and unparalleled popularity. And whatis the sum of his experience? What is the “conclusion of the whole matter”? Listen, my brethren, and I will tell you. It is this; mark it well:—“Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man; for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.” Let all who would be wise in the philosophy of human life, who are anxious and determined by God’s help, not merely to live but to live well, read and read again and again this marvellous book of Ecclesiastes. I know nothing like it. It is full of wisdom and beauty and truth.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” It is in such broad and masculine precepts as this that we see the spirit of true religion. And it is true religion because it is practical. There are people in the world who will sit down comfortably and sigh, and turn up their eyes, and lift up their hands, and whine out the insipid platitude that we are all sinners, just as if there was any Christian in his senses who maintained the contrary. But these good folks never seem to attempt to sin a little less. They sit there very comfortably day after day, striving to reconcile their consciences to a merely passive existence by persuading themselves that religion exclusively consists in the condition of the heart towards God, and justifying themselves with the reflection that by their inactivity they are at any rate keeping clear of positive sin. What then? Is there no such thing as negative sin—sin of omission as well as

sin of commission? Has then that primæval sentence been repealed in their favour—"In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread"? Were then those immortal words never spoken by Him who is in all things the Christian's example, as well as the Christian's Saviour—"I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work"? You know whether or not St. Paul was an active man, who in spite of delicate health, perhaps of almost life-long disease, in the teeth of persistent and cruel opposition, in the face of dangers and difficulties which would have crushed many a man of three times his physical strength, within the brief space of thirty years spread single-handed the Gospel of Christ from Damascus to Rome. Did he not enjoin upon the Thessalonians that "If a man would not work neither should he eat"? Did he not from Corinth, where he had laboured at that tedious and disgusting trade of weaving the Cilician goat's-hair into tent-cloth, write that consummate Epistle to the Romans, in which he exhorts them to be "not slothful in business," but "fervent in spirit"? And James, the Lord's brother, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, whose general Epistle is perhaps on the whole the most practical in the entire New Testament, who, in his scathing denunciations of sin, in his dress and his deportment and his stern asceticism, with his bare feet, and his knees hardened by incessant prayer, and his long unshaven locks,* was more like some newly-risen Elijah or John the Baptist, than the companion and fellow-labourer of Peter and John and the other Apostles—did not he, surnamed on account of his severe piety "James the Just," declare that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only; for as the body without breath is dead, so faith without works is dead also"? Do not tell me that the works of which he speaks are merely the realization within the soul of certain Christian graces; of a vague hope of selfish enjoyment in Heaven; of a deliberate and calculating and measured charity, in which, as one has said, "the mouths we feed are cupboards to store good works in; the backs we warm, clothes-horses to hang out our wares before God; our alms not given but fairly paid, a halfpenny for every halfpennyworth of eternal life; earth our chess-board, and the men and women on it merely pawns for us to play a winning game, a private workshop in which to work out our own salvation.† Do not tell me that the Apostle meant by works a chill and negative conformity with the bald letter of the Decalogue, the observance of social habits and decencies, the Pharisaic routine of dull and meaningless formalities, as

* See the traditions of him. Cf. Euseb. H. E. II., 23; Stanley, *Sermons and Essays*, pp. 292, 295, 302, 327.

† Kingsley, *The Saint's Tragedy*, iv., 2.

mechanical as the leaden swing of the pendulum day after day within the little bosom of a clock. No, sirs, he meant, and Solomon too meant, something more than this. If the Word of God were as narrow and meagre in its sense as some of its interpreters would endeavour to make it, it would not be of much use to any one but themselves. It would not satisfy the large-minded and the thoughtful, the unbiassed and the generous. Most assuredly such a contracted view of religion and duty would have been as alien as pole is from pole from the wise and liberal and practical and vigorous mind of the author of Ecclesiastes. Labour and work in the Bible, or works if you like, or "good works" if you will, include all that multifarious toil, all those infinitely diverse avocations of mankind, which are the traditional inheritance and the proud and precious privilege, as well as the inexorable necessity, of the human race. It is these bravely and manfully and conscientiously performed up to the best that men know, that the Word of God means by work. It is the zeal in turning to them, and the integrity of purpose in fulfilling them, and the courage in overcoming all their obstacles, and the victorious insight of faith in Christ, looking calmly through approaching death, and beyond it, to the lasting and beneficial results of all true labour (for good deeds cannot die); and beyond it, too, to that long night in which all human effort, even the most noble, is paralyzed by the cold and magic touch of dissolution, as the impetuous rush of some Icelandic cataract is conjured into petrified silence by the weird and icy finger of the wizard winter. It is these things which God's inspired oracles commend; work undertaken from the love of it, and the satisfaction of it, and the beauty of it, and the infinite good of it, as well as from the necessity of it; and not from some cut and dry calculation of whether it will propitiate God's favour and take us to Heaven, and how little of it will suffice to land us there, what is the minimum that God will accept. Rather let us lay our hand readily and instinctively to its allotted toil, because labour is in itself a great and noble thing, and because, even for the very youngest among us, the time is short and the days of darkness are many. Let us not be fanatical, and fidgetty, and apprehensive about our religion. Without straining too far, there is much to be said for that old motto of the Franciscans, that "labour is prayer;" and in the midst of our work for others God can take care of our own souls, just as the good Thomas Clarkson felt that God was taking care of his. But above all, in everything we undertake let us do it with our might, as if it were the last bit of work we should ever have the chance and the privilege of doing; do it with our might because, if it is true and right work, it is God's work, and it cannot be done too soon or too thoroughly, and if we are spared there will be more yet for us to do; do it with our might

because life is short, and art is long, and the hours, as that old dial reminds us, perish and are laid to our charge ; because "lost wealth may be replaced by industry, lost knowledge by study, lost health by temperance or medicine, but lost time is gone for ever."

And now, my brethren, I come to speak of that which, I well know, is in the minds of us all to-night. In a day or two the grave closes over one who was, perhaps, on the whole, one of the most remarkable Englishmen of this century. An old man he died, full of years and honours,

"An old man broken with the storms of state,"

but one even in whose age his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. You need not fear that I shall speak in any rancour of party spirit. I was ever one of those who believed in him, who loved and revered and admired, and was proud to feel that his genius and his labours were spent on behalf of my country and his. And even those who in his lifetime differed from him in their views of the science and principles of government, or the details of foreign and domestic policy, would not, I feel certain, wish to follow the dead man with any harsh or ungenerous censure, but would rather bow their uncovered heads and say with me,

"Hushed be every thought that springs
From out the bitterness of things."

It is usual to regard his career and to adduce it as an instance of most complete and brilliant success. I must confess that to me it seems far otherwise, to have been intensely sad, and only relatively successful. A man who only attains the passionately pursued object of his life, after nearly forty years of work like his, and at the age of seventy, when one might expect he would be too old to enjoy and appreciate it, can scarcely be said to have been pre-eminently successful, though it is true he has not failed. And for the sadness, O sirs, think what that brave spirit endured, what disappointments following one another in quick and cruel succession for well-nigh half a century, what contradiction, what wilful and petty misconstruction, what sustained and, to anyone but him, hopeless toil. Surely if ever the wise man's words were true, they were true of him, "All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it." Surely his only success was that he aimed at that which no other man with his antecedents and circumstances would ever have dreamed of attempting, and that a concentrated energy of purpose like his could not finally and utterly fail. His was indeed a splendid courage. It was not when wearing the coronet which he had won for himself ; it was not when Prime Minister, wielding with consummate tact a large and loyal majority ; it was not when nearly three years ago he returned from Berlin, the envy and admiration of Europe, bringing back "peace with honour" to his grateful country ;

it was not when visited in his stately home by the Queen whose authority he had vindicated, and whose throne he had strengthened ;—that he was truly greatest. But it was when striving against tremendous odds in the House of Commons, fighting doggedly in the teeth of ‘clenched antagonisms,’ springing up with tenfold vigour from every new defeat, as though he bore a charmed life, like Antæus rising from contact with his mother earth ; enduring for long years with exquisite patience, though by nature the most sensitive of men, a running fire of violent invective, of persistent and often unscrupulous vituperation ; with heroic fortitude stifling his own emotion, never wincing, never flinching, never turning a hair, not because he did not feel, but because he knew that his followers would become discouraged and disorganized if their leader showed the least trace of agitation. My brethren, these things are a lesson for us, and one which we shall do well to lay to heart ; a lesson of devoted and consistent self-sacrifice, of the sweet uses of adversity, of the bracing and stimulating influence of difficulties, since “goodness languishes without a foe.”

It is a favourite fancy of mine to compare him with the great Athenian statesman, Pericles. There was in both the same decision of character, the same dignity, the same far-sightedness, the same patience under difficulties, the same marvellous tact of combination and management, the same exemplary self-control, the same unruffled calmness and even courtesy under violent abuse, the same constant and reverential attachment to a high-minded and graceful woman. There are stories related of Pericles which might well have been imagined of Disraeli, as, for instance, of his courtesy towards his enemies, when a certain vile and abandoned wretch followed him home at night with jibes and curses and the most insulting scurrility. And when Pericles reached his own door, he sent his servant with the torch to light the insulter home. Or of his imperturbable self-confidence and courage under defeat, as when one of the kings of Sparta once asked Thucydides, the son of Milesius, which was the better wrestler, Pericles or he ; and the man replied, “When I throw him, he says he was never down ; and he even makes the very spectators believe it.” Or of his patriotism, as when he declared that, as far as depended on him, the Athenians should be immortal.* Which of these stories, I ask, might not reasonably have been told of him whose death we mourn to-day, and whose perseverance, whose steady will, whose quiet self-respect we admire not less than his splendid and commanding genius ? Yes, he is gone—

“The still strong man in a blatant land,
Who could rule and dare not lie.”

* See Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*.

And whither shall we turn for one to take his place? Who now will step forward to speak for England in the council-chamber of the nations, to make her voice heard and her influence felt, as they *must* be heard and felt, unless she will abdicate her prescriptive place in the world, and forego her beneficent mission upon the earth? Yes, he is gone. Of our three perhaps greatest men of the last half-century, of the three who have in England best impressed and best interpreted the spirit of the age, two have just passed away; the third remains. The philosopher and the statesman are gone; the poet still is left. May he long be spared to us, though he too, like the others, is an old man. Carlyle and Disraeli we have lost; but Tennyson is still amongst us. The great statesman who has died has been drawn for us—a life-like portrait—by the great poet who survives, where he sings, with no obscure reference, of

“Some divinely-gifted man
Whose life in low estate began,
Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star;
Who makes by force his merit known,
And lives to clutch the golden keys,
To mould a mighty state's decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne;
And, moving up from high to higher,
Becomes, on Fortune's crowning slope,
The pillar of a people's hope,
The centre of a world's desire.” *

Already, it may be, under the chastening and softening hand of death, his bitterest foes are beginning to feel the littleness of earthly differences and the insignificance of worldly quarrels. And, when the blinding mists of passion and the intoxicating fumes of party spirit shall have rolled away, time, the great revealer, will unfold to future ages, in history which has yet to be written, the true magnitude of the life and work of Disraeli.

I recollect to have once heard an eminent man express a fear that England's stock of great men is failing. Alas, my brethren, it seems but too probable; and I, for one, have thought so ever since I began to think at all. Be it ours to pray God that He will raise up in our midst from time to time those who shall firmly and consistently guide the helm of state, or command our armies, or add to our heritage of thought. Meanwhile we can all learn many a salutary lesson from the noble lives of those who have gone before. This is one of the great things they lived for—example. Their careers are the common property of

* Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, LXIV.

mankind, a book where he that runneth may read. Such is the healthy fascination of great names, and the impress of commanding lives.

“Ever their phantoms rise before us,
Our loftier brothers, but one in blood ;
By bed and table they lord it o’er us
With looks of beauty and words of good.”

So, then, from that long and illustrious life, whose end all England mourns to-day, irrespective of political differences or of party creeds, let us learn once more the priceless lesson of doing with our might whatever our hand findeth to do. And let us also learn the value of three things which will, perhaps, more than anything else, help us in the performance of our duty, three qualities which were pre-eminently conspicuous in him who lies dead to-day—

“SELF-REVERENCE,
SELF-KNOWLEDGE,
SELF-CONTROL.”



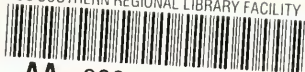
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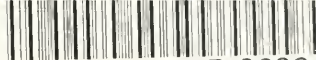
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